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Valparaiso University

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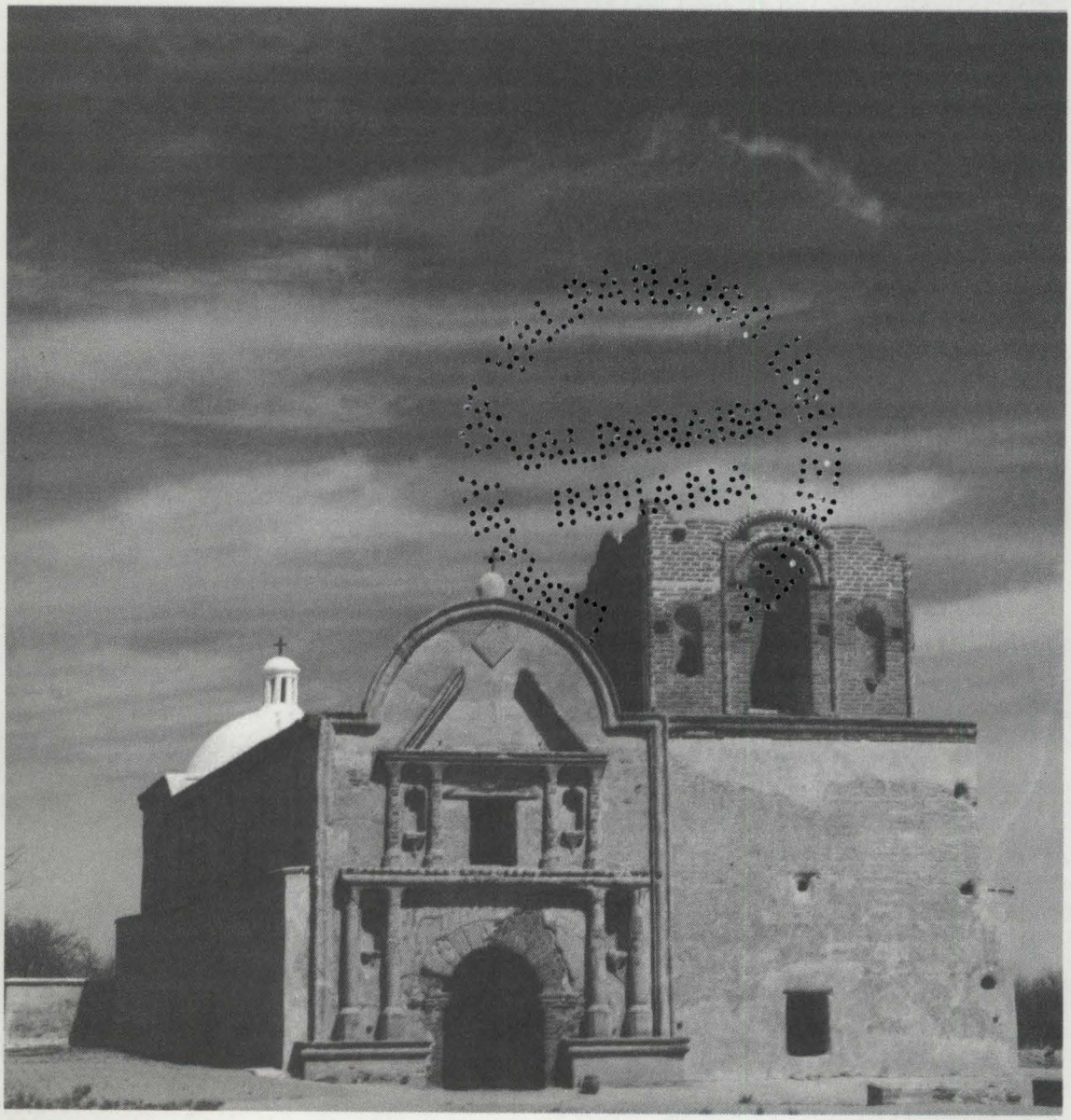
the CRESSET



A review of Literature, the Arts, and Public Affairs

October, 1986

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Contributors

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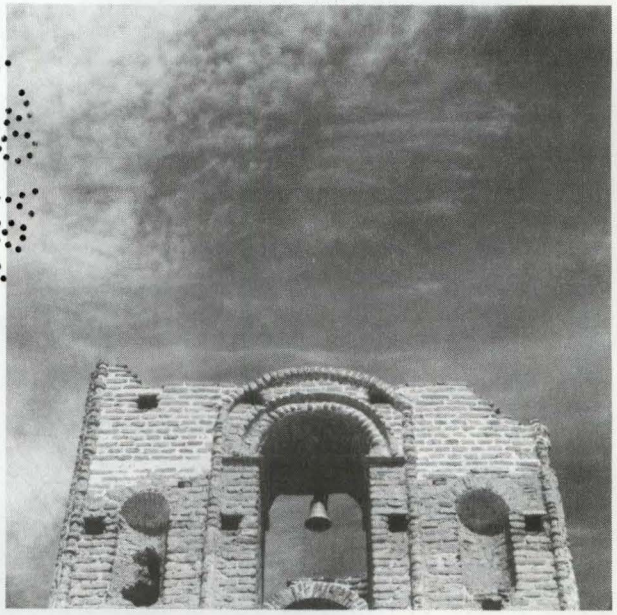

Above: George Strimbu, *Tumacacori Mission Church, Bell Tower, Arizona.*© 1983, black and white photographic print, 6 x 6 inches.

Cover: George Strimbu, *Tumacacori Mission Church, Arizona.*© 1983, black and white photographic print, 6 x 6 inches.

These prints are in a fall solo exhibit at Valparaiso University of George Strimbu photographs. George has taught photography at VU since 1972. RHWB

IN LUCE TUA

Comment on Contemporary Affairs by the Editor

Potpourri

In place of our usual extended commentary on a particular topic, we offer this month a series of abbreviated observations on matters of current interest. We are, of course, thereby forearmed against charges of superficiality.

• If you can't say something nice, our mothers all told us, say nothing at all. It is a temptation to end any comment on the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) just there. But that seems excessively dismissive and curmudgeonly. So what can be said that violates neither the rule of charity nor the requirements of honesty?

Not much at all, though we deeply wish that were not the case. Ever since the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) began its deliberations several years ago, the great fear among confessional Lutherans of a catholic bent has been that the new church would become just another addition to the Protestant mainline. The deliberations of the CNLC did little to allay that fear.

If there is any distinct institutional purpose for Lutheranism on the denominational spectrum, it is as a body that has escaped fundamentalism without stumbling into liberalism. Yet the CNLC, particularly in its absurd system of quotas (instead of catholicity we get "inclusiveness") and its hopelessly trendy plan for theological education (see the penetrating analysis by Leonard Klein in the June 6, 1986 edition of *Forum Letter*), has too often made itself indistinguishable from any random body in the National Council of Churches. It has been governed, in summary terms, too little by confessional theology, too much by tendentious sociology. (For the depressing details, consult the recent numbers of *dialog* and *Forum Letter*.) Lutheran theology has in recent years been going through an exciting process of reinvigoration. Why has so little of that renewal been evident in the CNLC's deliberations?

And then there is Missouri. The best that can be said for the recent LCMS convention in Indianapolis is that it managed narrowly to fend off a takeover by the right-wing fanatics. A blessing, no doubt, but a sadly small one. Missouri has resisted the lures of liberalism, but it remains worlds removed from a genuinely evangelical and catholic perspective.

This lament for a lost—or at least currently elusive—Lutheran center is not offered in a flippant or superior mood. There are large numbers of men and women in both Missouri and the proposed ELCA for whose theology and piety we have the greatest respect and admiration. We only wish that their influence were more manifest than is currently the case.

We could well be wrong in our pessimism. We hope we are. In any case we cling, as Christians must, to trust in the Lord who has promised that he will not forsake his church.

• There have by now been so many conflicting analyses of the effects of the new Tax Reform Bill that most of us are thoroughly confused. Does it help the rich at the expense of the middle class? Will its higher rates on business inhibit economic growth? Will it tend to diminish charitable giving?

We don't pretend to know the definitive answers to these questions. Different economists make different predictions, and the great majority of us who are not economists shrug our shoulders and hope for the best.

Yet in all the confusion one thing is clear. The bill will remove some six million of the working poor from the tax rolls. Many of them will thereby edge above the poverty line. That makes the bill, whatever else it is, a genuine reform measure. And therefore worthy of support.

• A recent contributor to *National Review* (Ronald Reagan's favorite magazine) argues that the term *neoconservative* should be retired. Those called neoconservatives, he suggests, are simply people who used to be liberal and are now conservative. In this view, Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz are not clearly distinguishable from the general run of conservative intellectuals, and *Commentary* offers not an alternative to *National Review* but an elaboration of it.

We wish there were less evidence for this proposition than there is. For a variety of reasons, the range between conservatism and neoconservatism has been considerably narrowed, and the differences that remain often get glossed over. Politics is about coalitions, ideas about distinctions, and on the con/neocon frontier politics has taken precedence. The recent indignant complaints among some old-line conservatives that the neocons have invaded the vineyard (and run off with the patronage) testify to the direction of events. As for the complaints themselves—which feature arguments that neocons bear ideologically fraudulent credentials—they increasingly bring to mind Freud's remarks concerning the narcissism of small

differences.

There was a time, and not so long ago, when clear lines of demarcation existed. Neoconservatives thought the Great Society a mistake but did not thereby reject the welfare state; they were firm anti-Communists but they remembered that William Buckley and his friends had supported Joe McCarthy and had never subsequently repudiated that support. Those were important differences then; they should remain so now.

Perhaps we exaggerate both the political/intellectual trend and the difference it makes. There is always the danger in ideological politics of excessive concern for doctrinal purity. But there is also the danger that in the effort to influence the course of events, the political intellectual might forget that his primary duty, Marx to the contrary notwithstanding, is not to change the world but to understand and evaluate it with all the precision and care for distinctions that he can muster—and let the politics take care of itself.

• The oddest thing about the Senate debate over the Supreme Court confirmations of William Rehnquist and Antonin Scalia was the vote that concluded it. The Senate approved Scalia 98-0, but the vote confirming Rehnquist as Chief Justice was only 65-33. The disparity in the margins indicates that the Senate never did get the debate—or the issues—in proper focus.

Most Senators continue to operate—at least officially—on the traditional assumption that opposition to Supreme Court nominees can only be justified on grounds of ethics or technical competence, not judicial philosophy. Since no one could doubt Rehnquist's competence or intelligence, liberals had to search desperately for some ethical flaw or series of flaws in his career that would disqualify him. It would have been better if the liberals had kept the emphasis instead on substantive questions of jurisprudence, which is where, in fact, most of their essential opposition to Rehnquist originated.

Instead they engaged in a fruitless and often unfair attempt to unearth the "smoking gun" that would prove the nominee ethically unfit for his position. They failed in that, but they dredged up enough vaguely unsavory material to leave Rehnquist's reputation under a mild cloud. He deserved better than that and the American people deserved a more coherent discussion of the issues at stake.

One wishes that Rehnquist's Senatorial opponents had been truer to their deepest instincts. The real issue had to do not with Rehnquist's ethics but with his judicial philosophy. He is a champion of judicial restraint, and he is a thoughtful and incisive critic of the judicial activism that has become the hallmark of liberal jurisprudence. Thus most of the talk concerning his supposed "insensitivity" to women and minorities came down to his opposition to *Roe v. Wade* and to affirmative action quotas, and in both cases his opposition is rooted in his constitutional philosophy.

In this kind of situation, liberals should display more than they have the courage of their convictions. It is true that judges should not base their decisions on ideological preferences (the proper judicial opposition to *Roe v. Wade* is not that it is pro-choice but that it is bad law), but it is also true that judicial philosophies have policy implications. The way that Justice Rehnquist reads the Constitution affects the way he rules on issues like abortion and affirmative action. We happen to agree with his philosophy of judicial restraint, but we also think that those who think otherwise should not apologize for opposing him on that basis alone. It is certainly better that they be open in the reasons for their opposition than that they pretend they are talking about ethics when they are actually talking about theories of jurisprudence.

Had the Senate debate on Rehnquist and Scalia confronted the real issues, the votes on their confirmations would have been far more similar than they were. Scalia is the same kind of judicial conservative as Rehnquist.

Had the Senate debate on Rehnquist and Scalia confronted the real issues, the votes on their confirmations would have been far more similar than they were. Scalia is the same kind of judicial conservative that Rehnquist is, and it simply made no sense that he should be confirmed unanimously when Rehnquist drew so much opposition.

It need not have turned out that way. Some liberal Senators began the debate by indicating they would confront the essential question of judicial philosophy. Instead they gave in to political convenience and began to posture about Rehnquist's character. In the end, the debate degenerated into irrelevance and bad faith, and we were all the losers.

• For all those disapproving of any or all of the above, we offer this recent description of the editorialist's art: "Editorial writers are people who come down from the hills after the battle is over and shoot the wounded." That of course is vicious and unfair. If it were not so accurate, we would be deeply offended.

Renu Juneja

BEYOND GENDER AND RACE

The Celebration of Difference

(Editor's Note: Last February, the Valparaiso University chapter of Mortar Board, the national student honor society, sponsored a Last Lecture series. Participants were asked to prepare a lecture as if it were to be the last they would ever present. This is the third of those essays to be published in The Cresset. *Frederick A. Niedner, Jr.'s appeared last April, Gail McGrew Eifrig's in September.)*

To walk into my son's room is to enter another world. Half-human and half-insect figures hang around a plastic castle shaped like a hive. Robots capable of swift transformation into space-age transport line a wall, and creatures in weird shapes, sizes, and colors lurk under the bed, in closets, and behind the door.

To me, some of these odd shapes appear genuinely ugly and I have marvelled at his affection for them. He does not share my confusion, and must, I am sure, be puzzled by my aesthetic prejudices. For him, the "bad guys" are ugly and the "good guys" are strangely attractive—the inner shape of the being and not the outer shape determines beauty. I find his ability to go beyond shape, color, and texture rather comforting. And I have wondered if his generation, delighting in the cutely monstrous extra-terrestrial, will grow up free of the biases concerning race and color that so plague our world. So perhaps my fantasy of a world no longer fearful of what is different and alien will, in some definite future, be transformed into reality.

My son's world does not provide similar assurances on the issue of gender. Despite some very real changes in consciousness that we have witnessed over the last two decades, I still see the children in my neighborhood play almost exclusively with others of the same sex. Even at six, my son is acutely conscious of gender differences, which is as it should be. That at this age he should prefer the company of boys also seems natural enough.

But his swiftly developing penchant for generalizing on activities, personalities, and attitudes on the basis of gender I find rather disturbing. All my efforts to mold his consciousness seem puny compared to the greater force of cultural prejudices that he imbibes almost unconsciously. So he balks at taking dancing lessons, has strong preference for what he perceives to be boyish colors, and has recently confided to me that girls scare too easily. And I have wondered if even his generation will be bound by gender stereotyping that so plagues the world. So perhaps my fantasy of a world free of the limitations imposed by sexual stereotypes will remain just that—a fantasy to be fulfilled only in the realms of science fiction.

Yet my images of such a future, fed undoubtedly by feminist science fiction like Leguin's *The Left Hand of Darkness,* are hard to surrender. Leguin's novel creates a world truly beyond gender, a race of androgynous humans capable of nurturing in each individual those dualities or oppositions our world labels feminine or masculine. The odd biology of these people makes them acquire either male or female sexual characteristics during their sexually active phase—in response to a partner who is then stimulated into the opposite gender configuration. More interestingly, to have been a female during one sexual cycle, even to have borne a child, does not preclude acquiring male attributes next time around. The same individual has been both male and female, mother and father, during a life time.

What interests Leguin, and her readers who have been inspired by the promise such a vision offers, are the social and psychological consequences of such a biology. Since descent is reckoned from the mother, the parent in the flesh, concepts like legitimacy or bastardy of birth become meaningless. Since everyone

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can, literally, do anything, no occupation is defined in terms of gender. Since no one part of the race is tied down to child bearing or rearing, the burdens and privileges of parenting are shared equally. Since there are no preconceived divisions of human attributes based on gender, there are also no stereotypical expectations of behavior based on sex. Strangely, Leguin informs us, there is no rape and has been no war on this planet.

The power of Leguin's vision moves us beyond the biologically inconceivable to the culturally conceivable. While true androgyny is neither possible nor perhaps desirable, we may still look forward to a world where gender is no longer an overwhelming force in shaping identity, social role, or emotional and intellectual achievements. I have shared these visions in order to reflect on their relevance to college education. A more specific formulation of my concerns would be: what could we as educators do to stimulate in young minds this capacity I so cherish, a capacity to free oneself from biases of a particular sex or culture?

To construct my response to this question I begin by extrapolating from personal experience. I am aware of the dangers of such a strategy. To elevate the individual to the general may be to build a hollow argument. Also, there may be something stereotypically feminine about such a confessional mode, although women's preoccupations with the particular and the personal are not hard to explain. For most of us women, the world is relatively circumscribed. And as we struggle with self-definition and self-actualization, we often find so little that is relevant to our needs in the public culture that we must of necessity use the personal and the private.

There is, perhaps, even a greater justification for my chosen strategy. The premise of a "last lecture" implies that we reflect on where we are and how we have come there. We must consciously appraise our intellectual history if we are to distill from it anything genuine and true and worth sharing with others. In Keatsian terms, we must have felt it on our pulses, along our sinews and nerves, for "nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced." And by that neither Keats nor I imply a vulgar sensationalism. The experiences of the mind and the imagination also have a palpable reality.

My intellectual history, then, viewed from the vantage point of middle life in middle America, delineates a process for which I can claim some relevance for our concerns here although no absolute validity. To begin with myself is to begin with a sense of difference. I am a woman and I am non-white. To be a woman in a world where over half the population shares your gender should hardly qualify one for this acute sense of difference. Yet as far back as my memory can travel, my consciousness of who I was or what I could be seemed inextricably linked with what I was not and what I could not be—a boy and a man.

For young college students today, the world is very different from the overwhelmingly patriarchal culture of my childhood. At least it seems different, but I suspect that even today, a young woman's fledgling definitions of self—more so than a young man's—begin with this sense of her gender even as she sets out to negate or deny the difference. I don't think I need to explain my persistent sense of my difference as a non-white at Valparaiso University. My focus here is largely on this consciousness of difference, and what one does with it. The roots of this sense of difference, as it turns out for me, are gender and race. In a sense, the causes—gender and race—are irrelevant.

While true androgyny is neither possible nor perhaps desirable, we may still look forward to a world where gender is no longer an overwhelming force in shaping identify, social role, or emotional and intellectual achievements.

Having reflected briefly on issues of gender and race, we can now expand our perspective to include more universal concerns. What remain of fundamental importance are, after all, not the causes of this sense of difference but its effects—both on me and my particular audience here: students and colleagues. That is, what interests me is not what causes my sense of difference but how I deal with it, and that also only as a springboard for reflection on how we at Valparaiso University should deal with it.

The answer is simple enough although somewhat enigmatic: we must celebrate difference. To do this is to distinguish ourselves as mature, fully individuated human beings—a cherished goal for all liberal education. Current psychology informs us that for all of us, both genders and all races, the process of individuation involves painful recognition of separation and difference from the other. According to Margaret Mahler, for instance, the formation of identity begins with a separation of child from the original symbiotic unity with the mother. Early development demands that the child must learn to accept that the world is not magically responsive to his or her urgent demands. This separation-individuation process is a lifelong one and is often accompanied by recurring

traumas of separation. I would like to slightly rephrase Mahler by saying that these recurring traumas are precipitated when the distinctiveness, the separateness, the difference of the other, or others, impinges acutely on our consciousness. And how we respond to these crises is, indeed, a measure of our maturity.

There are several possible responses: We can, for instance, deny the difference by ignoring or avoiding it, by deliberately retreating into a comforting and familiar sameness. If going to a lecture by Professor X produces this sense of disjunction, let us not go to a lecture by Professor X. In fact, let's avoid anyone, at least at the level of real interaction, who thinks, feels, or even looks like Professor X. Let's share our intimate selves with people who think like us, feel like us, and look like us.

Another possible response that we have probably witnessed is to deny validity to the other and the difference by building fantasies of our superiority. That is, we can admit that the different exists but declare it to be inferior and therefore of less value, even, ultimately, valueless. It would be wrong to assume that things that are different are necessarily of equal value. When dealing with the different we should not abandon our ability to discriminate and assign merit. The words I have used are "fantasies of superiority." We need to be able to sift prejudice from fact. Finally, there is the response that I proposed at the beginning —we can celebrate the difference. I have not suggested that we celebrate the different, although that may be part of the process, but only that we cherish the difference.

To do this is more than to accept. The process of mere acceptance works something like this: You think differently from me, but that is all right. You to your own beliefs and I to mine. I see such acceptance as a minimal step forward, if that. Actually, I think this too is a form of regression. It is a perfectly predictable response in our difficult but permissive world, but it is a weak response nevertheless. What it lacks is connections and relationships with the other. It leads not to an affirmation but to an attrition of values, generating the kind of relativism that borders on vacuum and comes suspiciously close to nihilism.

"Only Connect," says E.M. Forster's epigraph to *Howards End,* and so raises the questions—connect what with what and connect how? The things to be connected are particular to the situations Forster creates in the novel. My brief description of Forster's novel which follows provides the necessary context to free us to use Forster in our deliberations on how to connect. The novel centers on a conflict of values that could be variously described: between social classes, between the masculine and the feminine, between the country and the city, between tradition and modernism. We could, for our purposes, substitute other terms, as long as we recognize that these oppositional counters embody values, ways of life, attitudes that divide humanity, making people different from, even alien to, each other.

Within the novel, at the heart of the opposition are two families—the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. The Schlegel sisters—Margaret and Helen—embody sensitivity of taste and feeling, affirmation of personal relationships—a high culture. The Wilcoxes are the philistine; they represent the commercialism and the modern progressivism of new wealth. Through a series of complex developments that need not concern us here, Margaret marries Henry Wilcox, a marriage of which Helen disapproves. She disapproves because one cannot connect with the Wilcoxes, only battle them. And battle them she does, rather ineffectually as it happens, by championing a poor, lower-class young man named Leonard Bast. Though he is not of their class, and is in many ways very alien to them, Bast has been earlier befriended by the two sisters and subsequently, and unintentionally, harmed through them.

In a casual conversation, Henry Wilcox predicts that the bank in which Bast is a petty clerk is financially unsound and headed for trouble. The sisters thereupon counsel Bast to find another job, which he does at a greatly reduced salary, only to find himself without a job when this new concern, now in financial trouble, retrenches by firing the new employees. The old bank continues to thrive but Leonard Bast is completely ruined—totally impoverished, starving, and without any future prospects either. Henry Wilcox was wrong in his prediction, but he refuses to accept responsibility for the ruin of the young man and refuses to make any reparation.

Helen, driven by her passion for justice and her guilt, tries first to shame Henry, and failing there, she tries in some ways to connect with Bast. She seduces him. As a member of the lower class, Bast does represent the other and the different for Helen, for class distinctions in England seem almost more impenetrable than race distinctions in the U.S. For me, and I think even for Forster, the issue is not whether these two classes can or cannot connect meaningfully, but rather how this connection is to be made. Forster makes it clear that the seduction is the wrong way to connect. Forster is not, of course, passing any judgment on Helen's sexual immorality; he is passing judgment on her motives. To Helen, Bast is not an individual but an embodiment of an idea. And Helen is not connecting with Bast; she is using him.

The climax of the novel finds Helen in England after a long interval, greatly pregnant with Bast's

child. She is now seeking to connect with her sister by spending a night with her at Howards End, a house that belongs to Henry but a house whose spiritual ownership remains in dispute through the novel. For Henry, Helen's pregnancy is a scandal, and he will not allow her to be there. He must save Margaret from Helen. Margaret, in turn, is forced to choose. She had earlier chosen to connect with Wilcox, however difficult the connection seemed and has been. She had done so because she sensed, Forster implies, the danger of believing too ardently in the division of their worlds—the Wilcox world and the Schlegel world: "Only connect! That was the whole of the sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die."

Forster has endorsed this as tolerance born of a greater, more basic self-certainty than Helen's. Margaret, unlike Helen, has been able to see Henry as something more than the embodiment of an idea. She has, however, not stopped discriminating. She does so in this climactic scene when she condemns Henry's moral blindness—his inability to see the connection between his own sin and Helen's, between his responsibilities to Margaret and hers to her sister. There is, as Margaret recognizes, a difference between judging and being judgmental: "It is those that cannot connect who hasten to cast the first stone."

What Forster has implied about how to connect can clarify my notion of cherishing differences. Obviously, to cherish difference is not to stop discriminating or even judging. Rather one continues to respond critically but does so with integrity and intelligence. It may be absolutely in order to say that what is different is also wrong. But to do so, one must at least go beyond prejudice and understand the different by seeking to connect. This also requires the ability to go beyond stereotypes, the ability, that is, not to pass judgment on the Wilcoxes in a lump. To connect is to be fully aware of the complexities of the situation.

Also, just as one must go beyond mere prejudice and mere acceptance, one must also go beyond mere use. You use what is different when you largely concern yourself with how the different and the other contribute to your inner needs. As, for instance, I sometimes think Valparaiso University uses me. A very dear, wise, and sensitive friend said to me last week, "We need you, Renu, to keep us honest." I am absolutely sure that he did not mean the remark as I could hear it. But let me respond to the remark as I could have heard it. To affirm my difference as a value because it keeps you honest is a virtue, my friend, but it is not enough. Nor does the insufficiency of the response have to do with any implied neglect of my needs. These should matter but for the moment they are also irrelevant. And to be fully honest, I will also admit that I have used Valparaiso for my needs, and been guilty of far greater sins—stereotyping and passing judgment on stereotypes.

The issue is, after all, how we should connect. I would submit that you engage with the different and the other not only to become a better reader of your story—though that indeed is a valuable fringe benefit—you do so to become a better reader of *all* stories. As Plato said of his philosopher, one must become "a lover not of a part of wisdom only, but the whole."

These attitudes that now furnish the house of my mind, whose validity I so unashamedly assert, I have acquired as I have implied earlier through personal experience. As you well know, I am an Indian by birth and some cultural dispositions. But I also teach English literature. There seems to be a contradiction inherent in the situation, although such a curious disjunction is, I suppose, fairly typical of a certain class and generation of post-colonial people—people like me who grew up uneasy inheritors of a dual tradition,

denied both the security and the entrapment of ethnocentricity. The drama of my evolution is fueled by shifting loyalties, frequent redefinitions of self and purpose, and occasional triumphs when the double vision can be celebrated for its richness and not denied for its divisiveness. These triumphs of diversity I wish to nurture in myself and in students.

The dichotomies of my childhood are easily visualized. Imagine attempting to shape yourself to Christian ideals during school hours at a British public school and "lapsing" into Hindu modes for the rest of the day. Or molding your conduct according to two conflicting codes of behavior: one that encourages vigorous self-expression, assertion of individuality, and originality in thinking; the other which prizes self-restraint and self-denial, submersion into community, and deference to tradition. Since authorities at home and at school remained reluctant to acknowledge the validity of the other, we children survived by compartmentalizing experience, by changing colors like a chameleon as we shifted environments. But we knew even then that we were being thrust forward into choice, that initially, at least, forging selfhood might demand alignment.

One such choice, the study of English literature, while giving direction to the process of self-discovery, produced its own perplexities. At the most basic level, how does one apprehend images and actions for which one has no referents in personal experience? I remember, for instance, my earliest encounter with a particularly engaging poem of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Spring and Fall." Margaret, the young child addressed in the poem, is grieving "over Goldengrove unleaving" and the poet admonishes her that as she grows older she will fail to sigh "though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie." All explanation about fall, even pictures, seemed inadequate to make available the rich associations of a season that did not exist in my subtropical world. At other levels, the problem was more complex: how does one learn to possess an aesthetic informed by cultural values different from one's own?

How? With great difficulty and much effort. But after all the process is not impossible or I would not be here. I have been able to survive as a teacher of English as well as others not so handicapped, have been able to unravel literary texts with equal proficiency as those who had deeper roots in this culture. Understandably, my initial effort was directed at assimilation. But having proved myself, I have also been able to overcome insecurities that persisted. I am ready now to cultivate my difference as a source of strength. I am no longer trapped in issues of gender and race; I can move in them and beyond them.

What relevance does my experience hold for students at Valparaiso University? Their situation seems the very reverse of mine. A system of shared symbols holds this society together, a shared vocabulary makes understanding easy. In so far as culture provides a secure sense of identity, my students have access to their culture and hence a stable self. Their inheritance is secure whether they have fully possessed it or not. This is a place of kindred spirits who have, to some measure, deliberately chosen to stay with their own kind.

And while we are all members of a larger community, an immigrant nation that cherishes diversity and ethnicity, even this vision of America emphasizes merging and adapting, blending the many into one: We are different and yet we are one; we have freedom to remain individuals yet we "melt" into each other. The sense of difference is muted down to quirks of clothing, habits of speech, and ethnicity in food. The similarities encompass a shared worldview and relatively compatible value systems.

Americans are different and yet are one; we have freedom to remain individuals yet we "melt" into each other. The sense of difference is muted down to quirks of clothing, habits of speech, and ethnicity in food.

Paradoxically, even this vision welcoming diversity is more a myth to inspire than a description of actualities. The real world, for one, is much larger than America. It is pluralistic as it is interdisciplinary. It will not allow us to forget gender and race. It will ask that we deal with the different and the other. Have we prepared our students for that world? Have we prepared them to handle traumas generated from encounters with the different and the conflicting that they will most likely encounter?

In academic circles, there is much talk today of how we should be preparing our students. Three high-powered reports have come out in the past year to address the apparent crisis in liberal education. We are offered a host of panaceas. My favorite is the one proposed by William Bennett. He urges us to reclaim our legacy by reading a series of important, original texts. In Bennett's canon of great books we meet a great world of white men, except for Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Martin Luther King. Such canons embody hidden ideological premises, as perhaps do our book lists and courses here at Valparaiso University. How well, then, have we prepared our students?

I think, in some small measure and despite our limitations, we have tried. In some of our general education courses, for instance, we have sought to embed an awareness of the historicity and mutability of cultural paradigms. As we move from the classical to the modern age, the literature of a period defines itself in relationships of difference. My students in my introductory literature courses bring to class the conviction that the world of literature exists separate from their "real" world. One of my first endeavors is to persuade them that while the art world seems to exist untouched by and independent of them, the converse is not true. Things in art move us emotionally, move us as practical agents do.

To take an example, while we cannot dissuade Othello from killing Desdemona, at the same time we are disturbed by Desdemona's murder much as we would be by the murder of an innocent woman in the actual world. This shows that characters in a play have the capacity to induce in us real-life emotions. My next step is to establish that our response to a literary work includes different elements such as our capacities to think, to act, and to act morally. That is, our response comprehends our total value system. If I achieve this much, I have, at the very least, made my students reflect consciously on their values.

To some degree, then, we can use our general education courses even as they exist today to cultivate a pedagogy that sensitizes students to difference. To study a text within its historical context is to become aware that people do not live in a vacuum, just as artists do not create in a vacuum. Artists and their characters must be viewed from within the totality of their economic, social, and philosophical relations—just as economic theorems, engineered artifacts, social doctrines, and philosophical theories must be viewed from within the context of the people who produce them and use them.

The Elizabethans were very different from us in food, polity, and family relations. To achieve this understanding is much. Nevertheless, the capacity of the past to dislocate the present is limited because the past is essentially defeated by its deadness. Trapped in a theory of progress, we need not engage in a real dialogue. Then too, paradoxically, because this past is subsumed within a living and familiar tradition, the difference may not be radical enough. The surest way of acquiring an awareness of the culture-specificity of values must be for us to undertake a cross-cultural dialogue with a living tradition different from our own.

What, then, should we be teaching and the students be learning? Surely not just a canon that essentially explores a common heritage and affirms a common culture. We must make room for courses, more so than we have done, which focus on humanistic expressions of the different. As I see it, the clearest way to achieve this goal is to institute a strong non-western core at the very heart of liberal studies. If we do this, we may not rid ourselves of our cultural baggage and, perhaps, should not even try to, but we can at least become aware of its origins and limitations. To make the unconscious conscious may be the first step towards cherishing difference.

For education to be liberal, it must liberate people, make them free of limitations of personality and environment. And this is not achieved through mastering a fixed body of knowledge. Nor is it achieved through affirming a shared set of ethical and religious values. What we should have cultivated in our students is an attitude—a readiness to consider new things, a flexibility, an adaptability, and an openness. If we succeed in doing that through ways I have suggested, we will have taken our final step towards the celebration of difference. And to achieve that is to achieve a kind of everlasting grace. And what is this heretical grace? When you celebrate difference you possess your world view instead of being possessed by it.

Running through New England

For three weeks, each October morning
Ends at water or dogs that excuse us
From another mile of this marathon
To learn coast, highway, the unrecorded pulse
Of endurance while the weather rehearses
For winter, once with sleet striking
Like the side stitch that flares and fades
And allows us to follow color south
Until the rain that takes the last leaves
From our trees takes us upstairs
Where we will stand, not thoughtful
About the end of October, light going out
All over the property we are selling,
Lost, after this run, in tracing
The ceiling's stains like buyers,
Measuring changes the easy way,
So altered ourselves neither of us
Will put our hands on the other,
Knowing whatever we've done, we are leaving.

Gary Fincke

John H. Timmerman

TRAIN OF ROBES, PLUME OF FEATHERS

Rhetoric in the Religious Publishing House

Look at this first sentence very carefully! It doesn't say anything in particular, but, in the editorial offices of many modern religious publishing houses, it comprises the most important sentence of this essay. It has enticed you to read this far, and in the abashedly pragmatic jargon which has come to dominate those houses, that first sentence is called a "hook."

The hook isn't necessarily expected to mean anything; indeed, its value lies in a certain degree of ambiguity which permits the reader to invest it with whatever meaning is desired. The hook does in publishing what it also does in fishing. It catches prey. A good hook, however ambiguous, has specific qualities. Typically the verb is in the imperative or interrogative mood. The hook is short, usually ten words or less. Exclamation marks are used even with declarative sentences.

The hook captures reader attention, then, but it also directs reader attention. Look where? At this first sentence. Or sentences in general. Rhetoric is the subject matter of this essay, sentences and how good writers craft them and how religious publishing houses simplify them. Yes, look at that first sentence carefully; you'll see variations of it in nearly every "mass market" book coming off the presses today, for the hook is one standard but necessary technique that an author needs to master in order to survive in modern religious publishing. It applies whether one is writing about marriage ("When was the last time you and your marriage partner really talked?"), about psychology ("You're not alone!"), about . . . just about anything.

But the hook is just the start of something larger and more insidious in what may be called "the programmed prose" of modern religious publishers. "Programmed" is the correct adjective, for much of the prose is computer calibrated. This may be done overtly by computer programs that literally quantify prose patterns to certain reading levels. By considering average lengths of syllables per word, words per sentence, sentences per paragraph, and so on, the program calibrates to an ideal mass-market prose level, somewhere around a ninth-grade reading level. Even if such a program is not used, however, the pattern of modern religious prose clearly falls into the scheme.

By considering average lengths of syllables per word, words per sentence, and sentences per paragraph, the publisher's computer program calibrates to an ideal mass-market prose level, somewhere around a ninth-grade reading level.

Observe these characteristics. First, the governing decision of editorial boards is seldom the intrinsic quality of the manuscript alone, but whether it will sell. Twenty years ago, if an author received a manuscript rejection it would likely have a note about "not fitting the standards of the press." Ten years ago, the note might have said something about it "not fitting into the publishing schedule," or "present needs." Today such a rejection letter will state unequivocally and unapologetically, "It won't sell." Occasionally a conscience-stricken editor will append a scrawled note, "This is really beautifully written. Hope you find a publisher." The first question, then, is not whether the work is worthy, but whether it will sell. And from that first question related questions arise.

The next such will be this. If the concept might sell, or as sometimes stated, "It meets an audience need," how can it be "packaged" to make sure it gets in the hands of the audience? Packaging begins with an edi-

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tor who, whether programmed or not, has very specific if mechanical directions. Some of these directions are as follows. The prose must be in "attention span" units, which means "brief." A now standard question on any reader's report form (used when a house solicits the opinion of an outside reader with some expertise in the subject matter) is this: "Can this manuscript be shortened?" This for two reasons: 1) the fact that pages cost money, 2) the belief that readers can't handle length. The standard book size now is approximately 60,000 words. A decade ago it was twice that. The editor's task, then, is to strip back at all levels: the book as a whole, chapters, paragraphs, sentences. Like viewing a book through a reversed telescope, everything shrinks and the edges get lost.

At those edges lie two things: rhetorical techniques once valued for intrinsic mastery over the English language—techniques such as cumulative, periodic, or compound-complex structures which embellish sentences (and elaborate ideas), and figurative writing. The audience, so the editors believe, insists upon sentence "nuggets" of meaning, and becomes confused by figurative language. The editor helps the writer say what he or she means and say it briefly. Here one begins to notice that in the commercial approach to publishing, writing is not unlike commercial advertising, selling ideas in neat little packages. But there is more.

The above represents prose packaging through manuscript editing, and a second packaging is like unto it—the packaging of the physical book a reader will hold in hand (or, more likely, give as a Christmas gift, the Christian seasons of Christmas and Lent now being the most important timetable in publishing). That package must be attractive. If there are to be illustrations, they are geared toward an audience, not necessarily to content.

Many hours are spent discussing titles—usually without the author's advice—which will also serve as hooks. Blurbs are solicited for book jackets from evangelical celebrities. Brochures are prepared for salesmen and book stores. In these brochures, the book may be listed as a "header" with a half to full page promotion at the front of the brochure, or as a "trailer" which can run to a simple listing on the back pages. Usually within a month or two of the brochure release, from which initial sales are made, the publisher will have a clear idea how the book will sell, how long it will last, whether it will be reprinted or killed. The best advertising, of course, is good sales, which explains the glossy advertisements touting, instead of intrinsic quality or superb writing or meaningful thesis, "200,000 copies in print."

All of which is to say that modern religious publishing is a business, a profit-making enterprise with a product crafted for a carefully targeted and potentially lucrative audience. But what is lost in the process? The result of writing with a hook in the heart is often a rhetoric which is plainly hurting. What accounts for it? Why have we come to this sadly pragmatic and commercial point, and from where have we come in getting there? Where did we lose the way?

I submit that the way we have lost is a valuable one, for it is a way which honored the nobility of the English language, which understood rhetoric as a skill and an art, and which saw as its journey intellectual stimulation and as its end spiritual meaning. Never before have so may words gushed forth from the presses, such a veritable logorrhea, and so little rhetoric, so little meaning.

Today the Christian writer walks a tightrope pegged down at one end by the unintelligible scramble of bureaucratese and at the other end by Dick and Jane watching Spot run. At either end seems to lie safety: mystification or mundanity.

Today the Christian writer walks a tightrope pegged down at one end by the unintelligible scramble of bureaucratese and at the other end by Dick and Jane watching Spot run. At either end seems to lie safety. Mystification at one pole; mundanity at the other. And how does the writer strike a balance where not mystification but mystery—that mystery of human nature which is also spiritual nature—is articulated clearly and powerfully so that the masses are transformed into individuals seeking and finding the truth of their own spiritual mysteries?

To fully understand and to fully appreciate just where the modern religious press is today, one must consider the point from which it has departed, a norm of aesthetic and rhetorical excellence from which the modern press has willfully tumbled. The norm that has governed publishing excellence may be understood from two points of view, the one being a basis of aesthetic excellence, the notion of noble thoughts in an equally noble style, and the second being a basis for biblical, Christian excellence which, while narrower in applicability, has been no less profound in influence as recently as a decade or two ago.

The standard norms of aesthetic excellence in history arose generally from the western tradition of literature and philosophy. In his *Poetics,* Artistotle delib-

erately placed rhetorical excellence over spectacle, a placement which Joseph Addison, among others, had no difficulty agreeing with some 2,000 years later. In *The Spectator* (No. 42, April 18, 1711), Addison wrote: "In short, I would have our Conceptions rais'd by the Dignity of Thought and Sublimity of Expression, rather than by a Train of Robes or a Plume of Feathers." One could trace a general agreement in the western tradition of humane letters at some length. The point would be the same: a high regard for the best thoughts in the best rhetoric, a fittingness between form and content.

Few people have addressed the issue from a Christian perspective as convincingly as Henry Zylstra in his brief, but influential and superbly written book *Testament of Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958). The general argument of the work is that the Christian testament must be worthy of the Christian vision. The essay "A Vital Language" establishes Zylstra's argument in regard to rhetoric:

> Those who ignore the call for vitality in the diction, language, or style of our spoken and written word are, it seems to me, making a mistake. What they have at the back of their minds is probably something like this: the important thing is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That, they feel, is the main thing, and they go on to imply that the form in which that truth is uttered is neither here nor there really. . . .
>
> All the same, such separation of truth from statement, of content from form, of idea from style, is a false and fatal separation. The form is essential to the meaning, to the understanding of it, and to the communication of it. The thing we have to say is inert, dead, and incommunicable until it becomes significant, gets its *sign*, assumes form. The truth, thought of as mere matter, is, if it be without form, like the chaos of Genesis. It is void.

Based on this analogy to Genesis, Zylstra calls for a *vital* form, one which brings ideas to life. And such vital form, in Zylstra's estimation, establishes the "genuineness" of Christian thinking and writing as opposed to the artifice of language as a commodity. Zylstra extends his views to the publishing world as he saw it at the time of the essay (1952):

> The product may have a certain polish, a practised skill, a rhythmical cadence, and a reasonably good facsimile of style. But the thing remains, for want of genuineness, a No-Thing, a piece of *Ersatz*. The soul is out of it.

Little seems to have changed for the better since 1952. Zylstra's argument still holds. It is a mark of sincerity, of genuineness, in Christian thinking to craft the noblest rhetorical vessel to hold our thoughts. As Solomon crafted the temple as an object of praise and adoration, so ought we craft our books.

What, then, does this mean practically? Several things.

Shakespeare said, "Give thy worst of thoughts the worst of words." The challenge lies in the inversion of his injunction: "Give thy best of thoughts the best of words." Clothe the Word in words of royalty; give the *logos* healthy flesh, not the diseased trappings of the age, not the cloak of green for a ride to the bank.

To do so the modern religious house will have to compromise, away from the dollar and back toward the former tradition in order to recapture the transformational and redemptive vision. In practical terms this means, first, that the publisher will labor to improve the prose of all publications, and will publish some works that are superbly written just as they are. Editors will be as aware of rhetorical theory and practice as they now are of commercial theory and practice. Such publishers and editors will see their task as transforming their readers as readers.

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It will mean, secondly, that publishers will commit themselves to publishing genuine works of literary art. While my argument in this essay has to do largely with the departure from rhetorical excellence in modern religious publishing, an adjunct to that has been the nearly complete forsaking of literary fine art. Evangelical Christianity has never fully assimilated the arts. It has esteemed certain sanctioned authors of the past—Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald, and others—with perfervid reference. It has done next to nothing to encourage new authors, especially ones not willing to imitate the established giants. The result has been a withdrawal of the Christian artist to a place where he and she have nowhere to go; as if one, bearing a God-given vision, must turn the eyes inward and watch that vision die.

The particular tragedy of the failure to bear a transforming and redemptive vision to the world—transforming by insisting upon the best of rhetoric and redemptive by giving the Word the best of words—is a peculiar Christian solipsism. Publishers speak a language only the target audience understands, a language of "conversion experience," of theological fine-

tunings of one's psychological life, of prayer techniques for one's spiritual life, and so on. To an unconverted audience, theology and prayer might be so much gibberish unless put into a language which in and of itself is compelling. The challenge to the religious house is to find meeting points of culture and faith with an unconverted world, and one such meeting point is the noble tradition of rhetorical excellence.

But, finally, what kind of rhetoric? In place of the formula, what? No better advice exists, I believe, than that given by T. S. Eliot, himself an editor at Faber and Faber for many years, in his masterpiece *Little Gidding*. At two different points in that poem, Eliot grapples with precisely the problem I am addressing here, for already in the 1940s he spotted the drift toward rhetorical vacuity that lands in the slagheap of formula language, and it disturbed him profoundly.

In the second movement of the poem, the narrator, walking the pre-dawn, smoky streets of London during the firebombings of the early 1940s, has a vision of a deceased poet who tutors him in his art-making. The poet tells the narrator that "Last year's words belong to last year's language." Writers are responsible to write clearly in the language of their age to people of their age. Does this contradict what I have just been arguing, that modern presses are nearly enslaved in the rhetoric of our time? Eliot averts the misunderstanding. "Our concern was speech," says the poet, "and speech impelled us / To purify the dialect of the tribe." The lesson is to use the best of modern language in order to transform.

This point is expanded and specified in the final section of the poem where Eliot envisions a rhetoric partaking of a divine harmony. It is a living dance of language in which every word and sentence "is at home." The words should be neither "diffident nor ostentatious" (yes, rhetoric can become an end in itself), but should be common, "without vulgarity"; precise but "not pedantic." Every phrase, every sentence has purpose: to illumine the divine harmony. This is the language which Henry Zylstra called "genuine."

We see a difference, then, from pleasing as many people as possible by being wholly inoffensive to educating and transforming people by excellence of rhetorical technique.

Having said these things, like Chaucer I want to offer a retraction. My comments here apply to a trend I see developing in modern religious publishing, and it is a dangerous trend. However, I understand the reasons behind it. The modern religious press is also a victim of our time, sucked up in an economic whirlpool in which dollars disappear at a phenomenal rate. Publishers have a responsibility to their boards and stockholders. They have to pay salaries and dividends. Moreover, the government has been most unkind in its tax laws. Governmental computers understand publishing idealism no better than writers understand computer prose. Publishers and editors find themselves between rock-like demands and hard economic facts. This is the rock and hard place of modern publishing everywhere; what is lost in between is the old idealism of rhetorical excellence.

So caught, it is admirable that a few religious presses have committed themselves to the transformational vision to produce works whose first criterion is excellence and not sales figures, works that may not sell well, but will endure as testaments of the Christian vision and rhetorical excellence. I could readily name three or four such presses, but will not, no more than I would name the three or four worst offenders.

But in between that rock and hard place there must be a meeting ground, a resurgence of idealism, a radical recommitment to transforming the Christian reader by rhetorical excellence while providing the redemptive vision of Christian life. We shouldn't settle for less, for we are much diminished by the loss.

In the Fall

the world is at a terrible height.
The larches stand shocked
in the fall, streaming up.
The pines go up like darts.
Even the mountains tremble
and throw their fire.

Halfway up I lean back,
hands on the lichened wall.

The fire-men in the gulf
hold their nets and call . . .

O not for me, Lord,
not for me . . .

I mean to go home climbing,
face to the solid rock,

heart for dear weight,
O heavy heart.

Lionel Basney

John Steven Paul

TO BE AN AUDIENCE

Reflections on Elitists, Patrons, Faddists, and Devotees

I don't know a more wonderful place to be after a performance than O'Neal's Balloon. Its glassed-in cafe affords a view across Columbus Avenue through Lincoln Center's marbled plaza all the way to the two Marc Chagall tapestries glittering through windows of the Metropolitan Opera. This national meeting place for audiences of the dance, the theatre, the symphony, and the opera functions as a cultural pump in the heart of a city noted as often for its ugliness as for its beauty. And if the sky is blue, the air warm, and the leaves have come early to the many trees that line the streets in between the high-rise residences, as they had last May, one can believe that there is very much right even with this corner of the world. Mayor Koch would heartily recommend the experience, and so do I.

The last time I sat in O'Neal's was after a performance of John Guare's hilarious and disconcerting play about the 1960s, *The House of Blue Leaves.* Originally produced in 1970, the play has been revived at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre by Gregory Mosher, formerly artistic director at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. (As I write this the play is still running.) At that time, the splendid cast included Swoozie Kurz, Stockard Channing, and Danny Aiello. John Mahoney, yet another member of the Steppenwolf Company who has made a success outside Chicago, played the featured role of Artie Shaughnessy. At the Tony awards, Kurz, Mahoney, and the director Jerry Zaks would all win awards.

So on that particular Saturday afternoon at O'Neal's we basked in the good feelings that warm the moments after a good show. We watched groups depart the theatres, disintegrate into individuals, and disperse into the city. We were waiting for John Mahoney, whom we had invited to join us after the show, and thrilled to see him making his way toward our table.

Now I must confess that my wife and I are fascinated by the presence of professional performers. We often stall for a bit around theatres after the show to get a glimpse of one of the actors on his way home. We don't line up at stage doors for autographs, but we often take a stroll around the theatre, have a cup of coffee across the street, or sit in the lobby of the neighborhood hotel most likely to be accommodating visiting actors. If we happen to bump into somebody, and we happen to have a pen poised and a pad of paper ready, well . . .

We've had a couple of triumphs. There was the time, for instance, when we were able to talk a bit with Leonard Bernstein after a performance of his opera *A Quiet Place* at the Kennedy Center; and once we nearly crashed into Mike Nichols as he dashed from the Edison Hotel to the Barrymore Theatre to view a performance of a play he had directed. Later at that same performance, we brushed elbows with John Houseman and Robin Williams.

Why is it that coming into contact with performers off stage is so exhilarating? Perhaps its because when you're that close to the stars you think they can't help but take notice of you. For a few minutes on that day at O'Neal's we had the undivided attention of John Mahoney, a man to whom we had paid attention for years. He repaid us for our patronage by feeding us bits of inside (if inconsequential) information about himself and the company, his own candid opinions of the quality of recent productions and performers, and a bit of a preview of the Steppenwolf future. Just as important, he listened to our opinions. For once, he was a member of our audience.

The House of Blue Leaves has much to do with and much to say about audiences. At the center of the play is Artie Shaughnessy, a man who wants desperately to be something more than the ordinary man in the movie audience. On amateur night at the El Dorado, a dumpy little club, we find him accompanying himself

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as he croons songs he wrote himself (obviously and comically echoing an entire epoch of second rate Tin Pan Alley tunes), e.g., "Back Together Again," "Where is the Devil in Evelyn." He forces a bit of lounge-lizard chat with the audience. He is irked that the management hasn't arranged for a spotlight, as they promised.

In light of the Billy Einhorn imperative, let us consider the audience, whether we want to or not. When it comes to audiences, actors are fearful, directors misanthropic, critics contemptuous, and only marketing specialists solicitous.

Back home at his apartment in Sunnyside, Queens, Artie suffers through his ordinary life: he's a zookeeper, father of a deranged son, married to a mad wife named Bananas, and mad about his mistress, Bunny Flingus. But Artie is a dreamer. He dreams of his name up in lights, put there by Billy Einhorn, his oldest friend who moved to Hollywood and became a movie mogul.

The fantastically romantic Bunny—a vision of pink angora and plastic rain booties—refuses to cook for Artie until they're married but she feeds his dream extravagantly. She is prepared to fly away to stardom with Artie, as soon as he can arrange to have his wife committed to a sanitarium on Long Island. Artie loves the poor demented Bananas as the vessel of his memories and hates her as the anchor of his ordinariness. He is determined to cut himself loose from her. He has the institution picked out: he visited one day and saw a tree on the property with bright blue leaves; then what were really blue birds flew away and turned some other tree blue.

After a marvelously twisted series of events—which includes the accidental death of Billy Einhorn's starlet girlfriend in an explosion outside Artie's apartment—the famous Billy arrives in Queens. He blesses Artie and Bananas, but falls in love with Bunny and her cooking. Finally, Billy whisks Bunny away with him. After watching his chance for fame and fortune float away as if on a magic carpet, the gentle, musical Artie falls into a fit of rage and despair and strangles Bananas with his bare hands.

Guare uses elements of form and content to keep the idea of audience prominently before us. His characters make contact with the audience in various direct ways: asides, soliloquies, and simple direct address. The action takes place on October 4, 1965, in the foreground of one of the great spectacles of the decade: Pope Paul VI's visit to the United Nations and his celebration of mass at Yankee Stadium. The entire city is Paul's audience, monitoring every inch of his progress on their TV sets.

But the members of Artie's circle are not satisfied to watch from the curbs or on television; they want to be in the picture. Each of them wants the Pope to yield to his or her need for attention. Bunny wants the pontiff to bless Artie's sheet music; Artie wants the Pope's holy presence to work a miracle cure on Bananas; Artie's son Ron intends to assassinate the Pope and then to ascend the throne of Peter as Pope Ronald I.

The House of Blue Leaves reminds us of the popular philosophical tenet of the Sixties' culture that everybody would be a star, if only for fifteen minutes. It seemed that nearly everyone expected his opportunity to be on television when the cameras pulled back to bring the masses of demonstrators, strikers, soldiers, music lovers, and others into the shot.

As demanding as the would-be stars are, the final claim of the play is not for stardom but for spectatorship. Earlier, as everyone waits for the Pope's arrival, Bunny has introduced the idea. Her intuition tells her that

> . . . right now, the Pope is flying through that star-filled sky, bumping planets out of the way, and he's asleep dreaming of the mobs waiting for him. When famous people go to sleep at night, it's us they dream of, Artie. The famous ones—they're the real people. We're the creatures of their dreams.

Without an audience to celebrate him, the celebrity would not exist. And as Billy Einhorn, the very incarnation of stardom, is about to return to Hollywood, he solemnly assures Artie and Bananas that if they weren't

> here in Sunnyside, seeing my work, loving my work, I could never work again. You're my touch with reality. . . . Do you know what the greatest talent in the world is? To be an audience. Anybody can create. But to be an audience . . . be an audience . . .

II

In light of the Billy Einhorn imperative let us consider the audience, whether we want to or not. When it comes to audiences, actors are fearful, directors misanthropic, critics contemptuous, and only marketing specialists solicitous. As Aristotle tells us in the *Poetics,* acting out plays is a kind of natural thing for people to do. But going out to watch people acting out plays

is, if not unnatural, certainly more unusual—especially in the age of the electronic home entertainment center. Who are these people? What makes them tick or, at least, buy tickets?

One Sunday last season, as I settled into my seat for the Steppenwolf Theatre's production of *The Caretaker,* I barely looked up as the house manager bounded onto the stage to address the audience. He told us about the delights of the upcoming season, reminded us that we'd be wiser to subscribe than to purchase single tickets, and extended the usual various and sundry pleasantries. These pre-show exercises are not uncommon in Chicago theatres and, generally, I find them to be almost as unbearable as when a waitress or a bank teller tries to establish a life-long friendship before finally tending to the business that brought us into one another's company.

But on this particular occasion, the house manager had brought with him a very special icon. At the end of his speech, he held up an Antoinette Perry award statue that had been presented to the Steppenwolf Theatre as the outstanding regional theatre company in the nation. "This," he said, "is yours."

On April 4, 1986, the Steppenwolf Theatre celebrated its tenth anniversary; last season, the Goodman celebrated its sixtieth season. And the season before was the Wisdom Bridge Theatre's tenth. And though these anniversary celebrations do commemorate the fact that plays have been performed under the auspices of certain theatres for a remarkable number of years, they ought also to be times when we remember that audiences have been coming to see those plays for an equal number of years. And which, finally, is the more remarkable fact? In the last fifteen years, Chicago has truly become the nation's second city in the live theatre industry. I would venture to say that in terms of their support of professional theatres located in their communities, Chicago audiences are unrivaled. The presentation of the Tony to the Steppenwolf audience that day was a token of appreciation for that support. Further, that gilded figure signified the importance of the audience to the theatre event itself.

The audience is of the essence of the theatre event. You can have poetry without a reader, but you can't have theatre without an audience. One deceptively simple definition of theatre has it that theatre is, fundamentally, "A" performing "B" while "C" looks on. There's always lots of talk about A and B, but just who is C? What moves her and Mr. C out from in front of the television and into the Theatre Building, the Shubert, the Goodman, or (God forbid!) the Arie Crown?

We know enough about the Cs to know that over the cycle of a theatre's growth and decline they are different people, or at least their reasons for attending the theatre and the quality of their participation in the theatrical event vary. Mr. and Mrs. C, for example, may be elitists, patrons, or faddists. Ultimately, the Cs may be devotees.

The first audience to discover and attend a new theatre is an elite. They are usually educated to the appreciation of drama and theatre art. They may be friends or acquaintances of the company or patrons of other, similar theatres. These are the people who seek out the theatre wherever they are and will travel many miles from their places of residence to see it.

There is a phase in the building of a theatre establishment when audiences function as patrons. Like Renaissance nobles, these are people who are well-educated and more or less monied. They appreciate theatre, but their motivations are primarily civic. They believe that theatre art is good for their community. They buy season tickets in order to make sure that

When It Wants Me to Think about It

When it wants me to think about it
it lets me be filled with it, grows
like a small cosmos, has a solar system,
atmosphere, rings.
Right now it writes its own bible,
thinks of a constitution, selects a form
of government; and it is maturing,
is trying to show me it is growing wise.
It wants to annex the next town,
then a part of the neighboring state.
It thinks about sovereignty over a country
rich in gold, oil—it wants
frankincense, myrrh.

Everyone should be filled with it
the way I am, it whispers
and gives me a string of ideas to fly,
a chain letter, and a can of mace.
It gives me a diagram for a bomb
and I am to go out in the world for it,
to say to mothers and fathers
that it is dearer than their children.
I am to say to the sons and daughters
that it is glorious. All the time
I am saying to myself it is nothing nothing nothing.

Pat James

companies of actors will continue to be available for their amusement and edification. Often, their names are to be found in the various donor categories and on advisory board lists.

After the elitists and the patrons have gotten a new theatre off the ground, they may look across the aisle and see a new kind of audience member. We could call them "yuppies," but let's call them "faddists": those with the highly disposable incomes ever in search of *the thing* to do. At present theatre, and especially Chicago theatre, is chic. Theatre programs are proper status symbols for the in-crowd to leave on their coffee tables.

Free tickets from the boss, tantalizing publicity, a visiting TV star in the cast, a guarantee of entertainment, must-see reviews from colleagues at the office, a long-resisted capitulation to an insistent spouse: who knows what brings people to the theatre? Whatever may be the reason they attend, this new theatre audience is of particular interest, not only to the theatre marketing specialist, but also to anyone committed to opening the multi-beneficent experience of live dramatic performance to more people. Moreover, in reflecting upon an audience in its initial confrontation with live dramatic performance, we are led to focus on issues basic to the theatre event itself.

The programs given to the audience at the trendy Ivanhoe Theatre are telling. The program contains a capsule primer for "the television viewers" in its audience: "Each live performance is special and unique and is distinguished by the fact that the actors can hear the audience and be heartened by your laughter, tears, or applause, and completely distracted by unnecessary conversations. Your silence during performances is an important part of the performance."

In other words, "please don't talk during the show." But there is more in the Ivanhoe management's caveat to its customers than just this simple directive. It tells us much about audiences and the importance of Audience. First, though the audience member whose attention is being requested may be in the theatre for the first time, he is quite used to viewing dramatic entertainments. Everyone watches television; many people still go to movie houses.

Nor are new theatre audiences new to spectating in general. While experts tell us that we are becoming more active (or are those the physical fitness equipment promoters?), Americans still spend a great deal of time spectating. Being there and watching makes up a significant portion of life: in TV rooms and movie theatres, but also in lecture rooms, meeting halls, sports stadiums, and church naves. There are unspoken agreements—*conventions*—of spectating peculiar to each of these spaces. The audience in a particular space spectates in a particular way. And, as the reminder "to the television viewers" suggests, spectating conventions are not altogether transferable.

The conventions of the TV room are not the conventions of the theatre, just as the conventions of the stadium are not the conventions of the sanctuary. Conventional behavior of any kind is the result of a complex development and manifests the interaction of motives too numerous to list. However, one important shaper of conventional spectating behavior is purpose. Why have the spectators come to watch? Keeping in mind that specific purpose relates to myriad individual factors, we might sample a few very general purposes: one goes to church to pray, praise, and give thanks; to the stadium to thrill at vicarious competition; to the lecture room to feed the mind; to the TV room to disengage the mind.

Free tickets from the boss, tantalizing publicity, a visiting TV star in the cast, a guarantee of entertainment, must-see reviews from colleagues at the office, a long-resisted capitulation to a spouse: who knows what brings an audience?

A discussion of purposes for going to the theatre brings us back to the elitists, the patrons, and the faddists. But there is a fourth type of theatre spectator, the devotee. The devotee attends *the* theatre because it is, for him, a source of meaning. He has chosen to devote himself to *a* theatre because its productions have been meaningful experiences. The devotee does not so much expect or demand that his theatre experience be meaningful as he trusts that it will. In his trust, he comes to the theatre with an open mind.

The devotee understands the special conventions—the *ritual*—of theatre attendance. He is familiar with the process of buying tickets and he realizes the importance of seat locations. The devotee knows when to arrive at the theatre, how to get useful information from the program, and the functions of the theatre's employees. The ritual signal for the play to begin is the lowering of the house lights, often accompanied by the raising of some recorded music. (The conventional raising of the curtain has, for the most part, been cancelled.) Now comes a very important part of the ritual: a period during which the audience member *must* come to the play; that is, he must actively inquire into the plot, characters, and setting.

This last is the major difference between television and theatre viewing. Perhaps the Ivanhoe program should contain another warning to the television viewers: "You may not understand absolutely everything about this play in the first two minutes. Please don't give up. We need you to be an audience."

Theatre is a poetic enterprise, an art-making activity. The thing made is certainly more than a script and even more than a performance. The thing made is an event in space and time contained by a beginning and an end. Within this box of time there takes place a dynamic interaction of poetic forces. The most prominent interaction is the one between actor and script. Undoubtedly, script shapes actor and actor shapes script until something new has been made: a "performance." But many in the audience understand the nature of their participation only in this limited way: they have come to observe the performance, the product of actors working from a script. This is what they paid for; this is what they will judge to be good or bad.

The script-actor nexus is only a part of the event. Just as crucial to the making of the event are the dynamic connections between the actor and the audience and the script and the audience. Of course, "the actors can hear the audience and be heartened by their laughter, tears, and applause, and completely distracted by their unnecessary conversations," but the audience has much more to contribute to the making of the event than simple emotional response. Such response is only the noise made by the collision of the audience's beliefs, attitudes, and values with those being projected from the stage. In the theatre, the spectator comes into immediate and direct contact with *the other:* persons, ideas, actions that are alien to himself. It is the rare spectator who is not moved in some direction by such contact.

To be a "devotee" means to offer up one's self in return for meaning. In the ideal theatre, script, actors, and audience are offered up in hope that a new and meaningful thing will be created, even though not every event will be meaningful.

The devotee knows what it means to be an audience. That the form of a play or production may be unfamiliar is not discouraging but stimulating. The devotee's ritual sophistication, born of practice, puts him in a position to receive meaning from the performance. What the devotee does not do is insist that the theatre experience fit itself into his framework of expectations. Happy is the theatre audience that comes to the play prepared, not only to willingly suspend its disbelief, but to extend to the performance its trust, patience, and goodwill. This is the audience that merits the Tony award.

The Pines Revisited

A moon such as this,
dropped low to a crouch on the
crest of the pines, was here before.
her sentinel eye always
off-center between us, watching your
orange kitchen window to signal,
then flinching at screams.
But nothing tonight.
New neighbors, young as these
wands tattering green of the future,
know nothing of moon as reminder
or pines as diving retainer
of echoes, except those of
laughter. They sleep now
behind wide-open windows. Their
children can burrow all day
where yours ran from to hide.
From The Man who might dart
any minute from denseness
even this moon can't dilute.
Or sun that will come up tomorrow
as no great surprise to those
easily breathing where
you waited sleepless, so long.
Eyes sealed against moon
washing blue from the red, the
courageous, once flaming
blood red of your house, they
fear no invasions, can come
to the historical fringe in the
morning, not knowing. But I
and this moon cannot sleep. We
listen for curses, for footsteps
raking a trail through its
needled expanse, for forms dashed
against moonscreen, for
glass smashing in, for screams
from your orange kitchen window.
But nothing tonight.
Nothing but silvered green silence.
And echoes, well memorized.

Lois Reiner

A. G. Roeber

THE PERILS OF PRIVATE RELIGION

Reflections on Religion, Morality, and Public Discourse

The recent Supreme Court decision which appears to render unacceptable moments of silence at the beginning of public school classes might be taken as a perfect baccalaureate topic provoking comment on issues upon which we feel compelled to speak. In fact, before this decision was rendered I had already constructed most of what I have to say to you this morning, and I feel I need alter almost nothing as a result of that decision. It merely reenforces the argument which I wish to advance, namely, that the notion that religion is a private matter is an unacceptable position, both politically and intellectually. When Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut can hail the court's decision precisely on these grounds, I can only wonder at the quality of senatorial perception with which we are graced in these times.

Let me make it clear from the outset that I agree with the view of English historian E. H. Carr that to know what history you read you ought to know what historian did the writing. You should know at the outset that this particular historian of America comes from a Lutheran Christian tradition and that he does not regard prayer in the schools to be a very interesting or compelling issue, that he wishes devoutly that our time could be spent on far more substantive issues, that in any event, as a trinitarian Christian he would not himself participate in some vague prayer concocted by committee, nor would he permit his children to do so.

Having said that much let me reiterate that I still find the rhetoric of Mr. Weicker and the ACLU lawyers alarming and annoying in the extreme. For to say that religion is solely a private matter will, I am certain, not be understood in the manner in which I can only hope the Senator meant those words, namely, that the government cannot prescribe a certain form of religion or make a very meaningful decision about what shall constitute religious expression in public forums such as our schools. Instead, I am very nearly certain that the expression, "religion is a private matter," will be taken by the unthinking as well as by the ideologically convicted to mean that religion is irrelevant to public life and hence has no meaning other than the subjective, or at most, the tribal. In other words, religion is significant only to me, or to the people who agree with me in every detail about what I determine to be "religious."

I suggest that you, as graduates of this institution, know better. The word religion derives from the latin word *religare,* which means to bind together. It is a quintessentially public, not a private, phenomenon. Religion cannot by its very nature be anything but public. Now by contrast, articles of belief, what one might call faith, are of course intensely private. If I might borrow some terminology from legal scholarship, we might say that faith exists under a "penumbra" which is both intensely private, and shared to a limited degree with those who are "of the faith," "in the tent," with those who are fellow believers. The expression of faith, however, in a religion—that expression of worship, of the very articles of belief, the working out of emotive traditions and associations publicly expressed—these always exist under a penumbra which extends far beyond the individual member and indeed beyond the boundaries of the tribe alone.

And for this reason, religion is necessarily a public matter whose expression will always impinge heavily upon the public life of the entire body politic unless that political nation decides to exclude the religious altogether from the public domain. It is, of course, that issue which has divided opinion considerably in our day. Exclusion, total exclusion, in fact is not tolerable under a constitution of a democratic republic that not only provides for separation of church and state (which it does), but which also provides explicit protection for the expression of religious belief, including, I think, debates in the public forum over competing and conflicting moral and ethical visions of what we are about as a people.

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Let me suggest further to you that only those people who are deeply grounded in the specific tradition of their tribal beliefs are truly capable of bringing to public discourse a valuable perspective on ethics, morals, and norms of behavior, a perspective that has been developed from a specific context. I hope you are all now aware as graduating seniors that all knowledge is contextual—not excluding that knowledge which has to do with religious belief. And for that reason, it is imperative for all members of a peculiar religious tradition to bear in mind the contextuality, not merely of faith, nor merely of the convictions which have been developed under the penumbra of tribal association, doctrine, and practice—but the contextuality of religion as well.

Pelikan is pointing to the paradox that Berger noted: it is really through the particularity of a specific tradition that we are able to make those connections to the broader world that lie beyond our most immediate values and beliefs.

In the American setting this means that one recognizes the historical reality that we are a democratic republic whose public forum has been characterized by debates over conflicting moral visions. Far from being a liability, this tradition has in fact been the very source of strength for America's religious and political life, a fact that Alexis de Tocqueville noted 150 years ago when he tried to explain to his European audience the paradox that, as he said, "religion is the first of [the Americans'] political institutions" and was in fact all the more vital because it was not formally connected to the operations of government.

Yet de Tocqueville also insisted that the commitment Americans expressed not only toward various creeds but also toward other small institutions such as the family stood at the very heart of the democracy's vitality. What Edmund Burke referred to as the "small platoons" of voluntary associations were, in both his mind and de Tocqueville's, essential for all broader and more expansive expressions of loyalty, especially loyalty to the republic.

The modern sociologist Peter Berger has echoed exactly these themes in arguing that political expressions that mirror individualism, expressions of the autonomous self over against the mass of modern society, are not only not compelling but are in fact invidious and destructive. Berger argues the urgent political need for what he calls "mediating structures"—those very associations such as family, church, and synagogue—the very particularities by which all of us come to know ourselves and our world and through which we express not merely loyalty to self and tribe but where we develop those mores which have broader implication for our collective lives in a pluralistic society.

The problem of course is that abstract concepts, denatured and vague expressions of norms and values like "democracy," "equality," "freedom," and "individualism," only become compelling when one begins to see them worked out in concrete, contextual ways. Jaroslav Pelikan has written in his essay *The Vindication of Tradition* that "an abstract concept of parenthood is no substitute for real parents. An abstract cosmopolitanism is no substitute for a real tradition." Pelikan, too, is pointing to the paradox that Berger noted: it is really through the particularity of a specific tradition that we are able to make those connections to the broader world which lie beyond our closest penumbra of shared values, beliefs, and assumptions.

Pelikan continues, "it is from tradition that one learns to know the liberation that can come only through discipline and a recognition of boundaries. . . . the growth of insight—in science, in the arts, in philosophy and theology—has not come through progressively sloughing off more and more of tradition, as though insight would be purest and deepest when it has finally freed itself of the dead past. It simply has not worked that way."

Now let me make the present context and the present tradition of today's ceremony a bit more specific. Sixty years ago Henry Merritt Wriston became president of Lawrence College and initiated a sweeping series of reforms that have marked the institution to this very day. In 1925, as Wriston took over as president, the nation was riveted to a dream unfolding in Dayton, Tennessee, where a young biology teacher named John Scopes decided to test the state statute which prohibited the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in the classroom. This famous trial, the Scopes or the Monkey Trial as it was sometimes referred to, is often regarded as the opening battle in a war between science and religion, between cosmopolitanism and provincialism, between liberated thinking and superstition in American life. Of course, it stands historically as part of a much older debate, but to a degree one can say that before 1925 these issues which seemed to pit reason against revelation, the heart against the head of America, had never seemed so starkly defined as they were in that trial. The war of which the Scopes trial was a part rages yet today.

Wriston followed the events of the conflict in his

time carefully, and at the spring commencement at Lawrence in 1926 addressed the senior class in these words: "You are going out into a religious world where civil war has broken out afresh. A conflict, thought to have been settled a generation ago, has burst into new and more violent activity. The impact of a world changing in every other important phase of human thought and activity has been too much, and the church is being jostled in the tumult. Doubts and questionings and problems assail accepted dogmas in much the same way that fresh scientific hypotheses upset the older assumptions . . . a satisfying philosophy of life can no longer be inherited from our fathers, when the demand is for people who can think for themselves. . . ."

Now Wriston did not mean in saying this that his seniors should foreswear the traditions of their fathers and mothers—Lawrence was a Methodist college and Wriston himself a devout and committed Methodist layman. He did mean, of course, to demand of Lawrentians then, as we continue to do now, that they take seriously the debates then raging and that they have considered grounds upon which to reaffirm a tradition which could no longer simply be inherited, that is, taken for granted. Moreover, Wriston went on to urge that the studied, deliberate commitment to a particular religious tradition was essentially not a purely individual act—or at least it could never stop, if I could borrow my own phrase, under the penumbra of shared faith. Religious commitment always develops under the penumbra of broader, public implications.

I would suggest to you that in a certain way both sides in the debate that opened up at that time over religion and science or reason and revelation, the debate over religion and its expression in the public arena, have misapprehended the true nature of our peril. First of all, I find it hard to disagree with Robert Bellah, who has recently written in his collection of essays entitled *Habits of the Heart* that "much of the thinking about the self of educated Americans, thinking that has become almost hegemonic in our universities and much of the middle class, is based on inadequate social science, impoverished philosophy, and vacuous theology." Above all else, Bellah believes, Americans today know nothing either about the traditions of belief—the biblical traditions which helped to create modern Western society—or about the broader public traditions of civic republicanism that lie behind American institutions and political life and that undergird our political, literary, and aesthetic accomplishments.

In addition, the failure of specific religious traditions to know themselves and to be confident about themselves, to speak clearly of what their traditions have to say about public social issues, means that public discourse in this country increasingly lapses into a kind of nervous, meaningless series of generalizations about abstract rights and values. Such abstractions, I think, have the effect of divorcing issues from values in public life.

The phrase "religion is a private matter" is itself a manifestation of this failure, and taken at its face value the phrase is calculated to make impossible true discourse on political and social issues that by their very nature can only be debated in the light of various competing normative religious and ethical traditions. Such a divorce is in fact perilous to the very survival of the republic itself, not least because historically, our tradition as a democratic republic, as de Tocqueville said, was never better served and the health of its politics never better safeguarded than when there was, in fact, intense debate stemming from tradition and emerging from principle, not merely convenience.

Any student of logic can tell you that if the moral sentiments that we regularly express in common-sense language have any value at all, they must point to a "prevenient reality"; we assume that some sort of reality stands behind those sentiments.

Any student of logic can tell you that if moral sentiments which we express all the time in common sense language have any value at all, they must point to a "prevenient reality"—we assume that some sort of reality stands behind those sentiments which are a part of our universal human experience. If these moral sentiments of guilt and shame, joy and resentment, or gratitude and praise are in fact a part of the network of human relationships, then we rightly must debate by what authority, upon what moral foundation, do such moral sentiments assume politically normative status, that is, upon what authority and moral foundation do they become law? To be compelling, law itself must be linked to moral sentiment, rooted in traditions of belief.

Here, of course, is where the issues of religion and the "public square," if I may borrow Richard John Neuhaus' term for the political and social arena, become most controversial. To those on the one hand who seek to impose some sort of orthodoxy upon the nation, whether that be in the form of Christian prayers in the schools or declarations that the U.S. is a "Christian nation," one might find it useful to quote

Oliver Cromwell, no mean moral crusader himself, who in his letter to the Scottish Church in 1650 pleaded, "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."

Now no one would conclude on the basis of reading that letter that Cromwell, in so saying, was urging his coreligionists of the Presbyterian tradition to become indifferent to matters of faith, or to public, political, and social issues. In fact, in this context I do not myself see any real possibility that a particular form of evangelical protestantism is going to become the established or publicly dominant tradition of American political life. The reason why this particular tradition, and it is that, has felt moved to join battle in a way not expressed so articulately since 1925 has to do, I think, with assumptions made on the other side, by another tradition which the evangelicals themselves usually label secular humanism.

The problem with this particular tradition (and it is that: it has a long pedigree that can be traced back well into the eighteenth century of American life) is that since the 1920s it has sought to define itself as the near sole inheritor of what one might call the rational, progressive, liberating, democratic representation of "modern" life. Interestingly enough, John Dewey, who was not exactly a defender of religious tradition, warned against this attitude to his fellow philosophers in 1922 in an article in the *New Republic,* where he commented that "the church-going classes and those who come from the influence of evangelical Christianity—it is these people who form the backbone of philanthropic and social reform to political action, pacifism, popular education. They embody and express the spirit of friendly good will toward classes which are at an economic disadvantage and toward other nations, especially when the latter show any disposition toward a republican form of government. The middle west, the prairie country has been the center of active social philanthropy and political progressivism because it is the chief home of this folk."

Again, if one returns to a specific context and to a concrete set of examples, I think you would find that the leaders of this particular secular tradition, at least in the present generation, are in many cases people who have just escaped from a religious tradition which they found oppressive, irrational, or somehow damaging. Now that, too, is a pattern or phenomenon which boasts a long and hoary tradition. One need only think of Voltaire's execrations upon the Catholic religion of which he had been a member.

In point of fact, the public square of America is perhaps slightly in danger of being dominated or ruled by this new estate of secularized intellectuals. What has happened, I think, is that the new class of sophisticated people who speak for a secular viewpoint have been better educated and therefore more successful in pressing their particular point of view about norms and values in public life than the evangelicals.

The true danger, however, and the real peril of private religion lies in the response of the vast majority of Americans who belong to neither camp. Examine your own reaction to matters such as prayer in the schools, abortion, tax credit for parochial schools, genetic engineering, and other volatile issues. Do you not find yourself reacting as I did when I said at the beginning of this address that I devoutly wish that such issues would go away? Who among us would not rather that we did not have to face up to the unpleasantness, the rancor, the raucous debates, and the uncivil behavior thrown up by partisans on both sides of these issues? And how many of us have succumbed to the convenient escape contained in the phrase: well, religion is a private matter.

Stanley Hauerwas has pointedly remarked of this trend: "Private morality has increasingly followed the form of our public life. People feel their only public duty is to follow their own interests as far as possible limited only by the rule that we must not unfairly limit others' freedom." The position Hauerwas describes constitutes only an abstraction which gives us no particular help when it comes down to coupling policy issues to matters of norms and values. Upon examination we know that this cannot suffice. Faith may be a private matter but religion never is.

Our danger, I think, lies precisely in this exhaustion, in our willfull or careless ignorance of what specific traditions have to say or fail to say about issues that, whether we admit it consciously or not, matter deeply to us not only individually but collectively as a nation. Power, even more than nature, abhors a vacuum. Nothing is more dangerous to the survival of an American experiment in democratic republicanism than the abandonment of the public square, the creation of Neuhaus' *Naked Public Square* where discourse emanating from principle about competing and conflicting moral visions will no longer be permitted to take place.

It is precisely the danger that this naked public square may be evolving that has moved Neuhaus and Pelikan and Berger, all members of my own particular tradition, to write impassioned pleas for the defense of and the knowledgeable commitment to a particular tradition and to mediating structures. They have done so not, I emphasize, in a call to provincial tribalism, but from a demand for a clear vision of the public responsibility which all traditions have to defend—not out of convenience but from principle—the arena of democracy which allows them to compete for a hear-

ing.

Our danger lies not so much in the possibility of the new religious right imposing a sectarian morality upon the whole (though if that were to happen, one could only say that indifferent and ignorant people both pseudo-religious and secular alike let it happen). Far more serious, I think, is the possibility that those among us who mouth the secular piety that religion is only a private matter will thereby succeed in stripping the public square of moral debate. The vacuum created by such an awful silence will be filled by the most ominous creation of the twentieth century, the totalitarian state, which acknowledges no moral standard except its own measure of self-interest, expressed in the exercise of naked power.

Let me therefore end with a story, a kind of parable, from my own context, my own tradition. The story in its large historical outline is well known to all of you, but it holds deep personal meaning for me.

The last of my father's family to live in the village in Saxony—now a part of the German Democratic Republic—where they had lived for 400 years perished in the Nazi concentration camps during the 1930s and 1940s. Early members of the Communist party in Saxony in the 1920s, they had long since abandoned the Lutheran Church in which the family had lived and worshipped in both Germany and America since 1534. They abandoned it, I think, because this tradition no longer spoke to the social and political issues of the real, lived context of their lives.

The perversion of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms, that of the state caring for God's law in the world and the church addressing God's promises for a life continuing beyond this world, had by 1883 advanced so far that during the 400th anniversary celebrations of Luther's birth, the Reformer had been expropriated by Bismarck and transformed into a prop for a political empire in which the church was already moribund. By the 1880s the churches in Germany already stood empty in the midst of a society that had become indifferent to a tradition which had failed conspicuously to be a religion, to be a force binding people together and addressing the contextual issues of their public, their social, their political lives. The long-term implications of that failure and the resulting indifference were so horrific that the tradition in which I stand has not recovered from those events even today.

Pastor Martin Niemoeller, himself a strong opponent of the Nazi state, penned these now familiar lines about this peril: "In Germany they came first for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. And then they came for the Catholics and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me and by that time no one was left to speak up." The public square of Germany, of course, had been naked for quite some time.

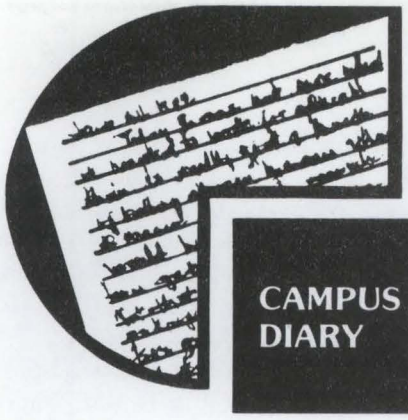
And you? Do you remain indifferent, do you remain ignorant of your own traditions, both religious and civic? President Wriston and we here today would not have it so. Wriston's words might well serve you today as they did 60 years ago: "Grow with your age . . . do your part in widening the horizon of mankind, and in seeking adequate solutions to the problems of church and state, of business and of learning." To that I would add, do it not for yourselves alone, but for the sake of us all, for all children, for your children, for the world in which we live. I urge you to flee the false security and the comfortable illusion of private religion. You owe the best which the traditions of Lawrence have to offer you, nothing less. God speed.

Changes

Her apron lifted, hesitant, then spilled
down creases in her skirt whose hem furled
when she tiptoed over sidewalk cracks.
Tweed suits and silk dresses gathered
for the show at Wrigley Plaza, lured
by burnished wrinkles in her wooden face
painted sea-green. The puppeteer
whose trousered legs blocked Lake Shore wind
as her hands—veins in bas-relief, floated
on waves on an accordioned dirge—recalled
the strings whose black knots spoke
the final word.

You spoke of other cords
when a campanile we could not find
tolled with the accordion. First
the bell at rest, her crown by canons held
fast to her stock. The ringer feels the stay
as she glides past the balance, rests against
the slide, then pulls him to his toes. He'll
not let go, though deaf from her thick tongue
which peals random numbers in wayward reverie,
he, a prisoner; she, in bondage kept.
The puppeteer heard, too; the crone, knowing,
stared at us through black pools for eyes.

Martha M. Vertreace



The Sales Lady

Richard Lee

Last summer on my TV a spaceship of tourists, including a grandfather and his grandson, hovered lovingly over the Statue of Liberty. Then, back on earth and under the benediction of the Statue, the old man handed something sacred to the boy. A close-up of his palm revealed a Statue of Liberty medallion given to the grandfather by his father long ago, in 1986, during the centennial celebration of the Statue. The commercial then cut to a shining pair of the medallions in gold and silver, and a voice-over from the United States Treasury hustled us to buy them now "singly or in sets" at our nearest K-Mart.

Well, "gold and silver have I none," and while I prefer fewer Treasury dollars spent to propagandize me, this TV commercial stands out as one of the more warming in a long, hot summer of commercials during the most commercialized celebration of liberty ever imagined by a free people. This commercial also stands out as a nearly perfect parable of the conceptual difficulty Americans suffer in celebrating liberty.

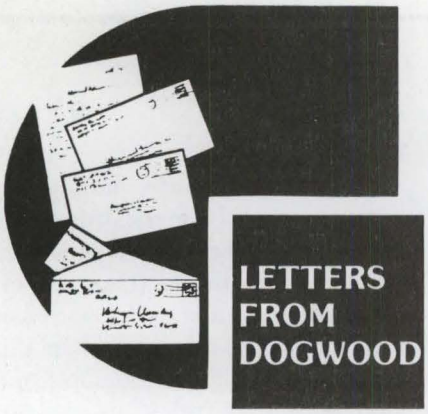
This is not the place to do a frame-by-frame semiological analysis of the parable, but it may be the place for commonsensically noting that this commercial urges us to *buy* something to celebrate liberty and melds indistinguishably into the commercials of the usual movers and sellers of capitalist America. The line is fine between a deodorant commercial showing you the pit of the upraised arm of the Statue of Liberty while urging you also to "Raise Your Hand If You're SURE!" and the United States Treasury nudging you to buy a medallion or two to "Keep Liberty in Mint Condition!" The same propagandizing of liberty as consumer freedom occurs in either case.

To be sure, there is nothing wrong and everything right with consumer freedom, and the ready availability of affordable goods, including gold and silver medallions, is properly considered a freedom. Americans are justly famous for getting consumer freedom down right—and for expanding it at home and exporting it abroad—even when they are wrong on other freedoms both here and there. In commercialized celebrations of liberty, however, the propagandizing of liberty as consumer freedom drives out all other considerations of liberty and becomes vicious. In the last stages of this conceptual muddle consumer freedom defines liberty rather than liberty defining consumer freedom.

Part of this muddling lies in the nature of American propaganda (principally but not exclusively capitalist advertising) itself. It is impossible to propagandize a person or a people into being free or acting freely, but it is relatively easy (glitches duly noted) to propagandize consumers into the consumption of goods—and into the belief that their consumption proves their liberty. This part of the muddle I think is now past solution in our society, and capitalist advertising will in large part determine our concept of liberty until the last sale is made. That part of liberty which depends upon freedom *from* propagandized consumption will always have difficult days.

Another part of the muddle lies in the nature of American patriotic celebrations like the lollapalooza last summer with Our Lady of Perpetual Immigration. The quarter of a billion of us now settled in this country really have little in common with each other except our being Americans, and our celebrations of liberty must necessarily be broad, loud, and nearly empty so everybody can pour his or her own meaning into them. Consumer freedom is probably the most universal and most innocuous meaning to pour into liberty, and those appalled by consumer freedom dominating our celebrations of liberty should consider the worse alternatives. Would anyone prefer the propagandized meaning of liberty be Manifest Destiny? Christian America? Star Wars to End All Wars? Liberty propagandized as consumer freedom is false, but it may be a safer falsehood than liberty celebrated as unrestrained nationalism, militarism, and religious fanaticism.

My own view upon my TV viewing of America's rollicking commercialized celebration of liberty last summer is that we lose clarity about liberty when it is celebrated alone. The sustaining myth of the Enlightenment remains liberty *and* equality *and* fraternity. Unless we find fresh parables to re-enact that myth fully, we may wallow in a muddle about liberty so insidious that we know not the muddle we are in. It has become unfashionable to connect liberty, equality, and fraternity as the instruments they are for each other, but we need to start fashioning those very parables now for the sake of the grandmothers and grandfathers of the next century. Perhaps then they will have more to tell their grandsons and granddaughters than liberty was worth $24 for the gold and $7.50 for the silver.



The Candor Beyond Candor

Charles Vandersee

Dear Editor:

I keep remembering two pieces in the same issue of the *New York Times Book Review.* Both dealt with "loss."

One was by Alfred Kazin, about James Agee, film critic and author of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* Agee, who died at age 46, never got over the loss of his father, who died when James was six. A *Death in the Family* is his book about the trauma.

The second piece, a review of Reynolds Price's latest novel, mentioned a pattern in Price's work. In his novels are characters who feel that right from the start they've lost something that most other people have: their own chance for innocence, childish delight, impunity. The mothers of some of these persons have died giving birth to them—sufficient reason to feel "as if they are guilty from their first breath."

Right now is the kindest season in Dogwood, Virginia: October and vigor. It's warm enough to eat outdoors under the trees, at Martha's near the Univerity or at Zona Rosa on the downtown mall, but you anticipate winter: concerts, plays, Advent hymns, waking up to the first snow cover.

So "loss" is unusually perplexing right now. Is it axiomatic that children deprived of a parent grow up with a different outlook? Is Agee a paridigm? I know people thus deprived, but it isn't the sort of thing one asks about. Do other losses—fortune, combat, faith, illusion—leave permanent, painful scars? These candid existential questions appear only in plays and books. For "real life," I fall back on intuition, and distrust the notion. It seems simplistic and condescending to think that loss makes a person a citizen of a different, and drearier, country.

Still, my own academic work is in the humanities, and the humanities have a long record of fascination with loss. The humanities consider, obviously, the human condition, and in the West the fundamental human condition, depicted largely by men, is said to be loss. There was once a state of Innocence, and then a Fall. Or, a Golden Age and then Decline. Or simple faith and complex architecture, then Renaissance hubris, and then revolutions and buildings burning.

This is a caricature but humanists will recognize it. Odysseus lost his homeland, Job his flocks, Lear his mind. The New World has lost its passenger pigeons, bison, and clean air. Wordsworth described his "intimations of immortality": he existed, before birth, in a perfect world, and he came into our world "trailing clouds of glory," which he soon lost.

Agee may not be a human paradigm, but Wordsworth is a humanist's paradigm. Thus in English-speaking literature the great shock of Emerson and Whitman, who consciously rejected the idea of personal and historical loss. If humankind has lost anything, they asserted, it is the prison-house of autocracy, bogus authority, stifling convention, hopelessness, doom. An invigorating loss, that we do well to call gain.

Modern humanist critics admire the work of Whitman and Emerson, but they do not endorse their message. Walt and Waldo sound too much like brash teenagers or crass, beaming businessmen: the moment's MTV, tomorrow's bottom line. Neither envisions the hard, dark past, which is the iron and zinc that make us durable. Walt and Waldo are those funny "transparent eyeballs" sitting on luminous mountaintops; true humanists scrounge below in the ocean garbage troughs for Leviathan. Emerson, notoriously, seemed undamaged by the death of his young son; his existential behavior was consistent with his philosophy.

Modern humanists admire the work of Whitman and Emerson, but they do not endorse their message. Walt and Waldo sound too much like brash teenagers.

It is true that since 1945 we have a new entitlement to loss. At Hiroshima and Nagasaki there were clouds with the same shape as a giant eyeball; we saw more lives lost in less time than before. As Robert Hass has put it, in a post-war poem, "Meditation at Lagunitas" (becoming an anthology classic), "All the new thinking is about loss."

Still, he says immediately: "In this it resembles all the old thinking." But again, only humanists

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think this way—I think. That is, "serious" poets, novelists, playwrights, artists; historians and philosophers and theologians and critics. So abundant you find them without searching. Open a magazine; a poet of today, a woman, is described as "good at elegy." Eleanor Ross Taylor cherishes "a vanishing rural culture" and deals with "loss of faith in personal immortality."

Ordinary human beings do not talk about loss. Few people are ridden by nostalgia; most look forward to new projects, children and children's children, Yellowstone next summer.

But maybe loss is a taboo. Perhaps in the West we all do clutch secretly the feeling that existence is marred by omission. Only it isn't the sort of thing we ask each other about. When sex is cleansed of the crust of taboo, possibly we still will not confess to Phil Donahue the sense that before we ever made our plans for Yellowstone we had lost something complete and great. A clockword geyser and a vinyl tent—mere Plastic Age substitutes for the ineffable and irretrievable. The rocks of the ages are dissolved into sand.

However, I don't believe it. I don't believe Lee Iacocca and Ronald Reagan and Robert Schuller feel in their souls, in some virgin corner unprowled by ghost writers, speechwriters, or Emerson Whitman Peale, a queasy sense of walking on sand. Pop symbols, these, for the dominant feeling in the West. I do think professional humanists feel shifting sand under their feet much of the time, and from this comes a strain and effort at balance that makes for performance we admire. But does the typical citizen of Dogwood or Lake Wobegon?

I don't *know*. One doesn't ask. People seem resilient, but I don't visit them at 3 a.m. So I seem to be looking more and more in life for what I find so easily and rewardingly in literature: a candor beyond candor.

It sounds absurd. Magazines candid about the way God constructed the human body, its tetons and crevasses, are being pulled off the shelves. People stop going to church because "passing of the peace" risks someone looking you in the eye. People stop going to movies because of "behavior that belongs in the bedroom."

Maybe loss is a taboo. Perhaps we all do clutch secretly the feeling that existence is marred by omission. Only it isn't the sort of thing we ask each other about.

But what we call "candor" is likely to be merely more information. Or being more "open" about what we already know. You can call me "Mr." Humanist instead of "Herr Professor Doktor." So-called candor is phony; it has to do with manners rather than with the geothermal depths of one's being. Even authentic testimony about personal religious conversion is notoriously bound by conventions.

So "candor beyond candor," by contrast, has to present genuine individual human minds and feelings, in infinite detail. By persons who have examined themselves microscopically, and extruded to great subtlety the language available to them. Beneath your manners and conventions, what are the trace elements in your personal bedrock? What minerals are those sand crystals blowing in the wind? When a human being rises up from a major loss, is it more like rising up from a bayonet in the chest, or a hard wood floor in the face? Or is it a different kind of thing, intangible, invisible, like the air inside an oven?

Every Sunday, in the order of Confession, I hear people say they are "in bondage to sin." What verily do they express? How would they put it in their own extruded language? What is the sensation of "bondage" that they feel? What kind of freedom has been lost? Is the word "bondage" a confession that someone else has better language than they do, for a vague discontent? Is it a prescription for how one is *supposed* to feel, if one is in a certain place at a certain time?

Is it, for some people, a puny syllable for a suicidally constricting agony?

My own humanistic expertise is American literature and, by extension, the American mind; I think I know it fairly well, and it strikes me that search for the candor beyond candor is a heroically difficult enterprise, in this nation and this era. For probing, it will require a Studs Terkel beyond any Studs Terkel that Plato might have imagined. Americans do not care for true candor; they love its posturing, as Europeans know, and they often confuse candor with glib, sinless confessions, noisy fatuities, and a willingness to lose face for as much as five minutes.

My notion of true revelation on earth—candor beyond candor—would be watching a SuperTerkel gently, sl-o-o-o-ow-ly, disarmingly, with the finesse of an expert masseur and acupuncturist, investigate the premises and reasoning and experiential grounding of a typical American Christian fundamentalist. Start with that. Minute examination: cellular structure through microphotography. No press conference frenzy, and no entrapment. Just ask the questions that one just doesn't ask. Do the same with an unmilitantly agnostic professor of

modern literature. The found and the lost. Or, it may turn out, vice versa. (Is, for humanists, loss more a spur to imagination than a felt condition?)

Not knowing the future, no wonder we're phony when seeming candid. In the expression "Let it all hang out," the word *all* is phony. That's just what doesn't hang out.

So what this so-called humanist wants then is mere cheap entertainment? (Voyeur, he wants to watch the inconsistencies we all live by brought out glaring under a naked bulb, so that like Sinclair Lewis in Gopher Prairie and Zenith, he can smirk and feel superior.) Well, not quite. In fact, that itself is part of the candor one wants to get beyond. What news is it any longer that each of us is a divided self? In parochial school it was interesting that Paul would do good but couldn't; today, can any of us stomach another sermon on the subject?

John Adams, in his letters and longwinded discourses, feared that the American experiment was doomed. Freedom would descend into license—another Eden lost. But in one passionate letter Eden flourished. He said his was a war generation. It made the next generation free for statecraft. Their children would be free for commerce. The fourth generation finally would be free to study art, music, letters—clearly for him, in this passionate moment (and for all true humanists) the ultimate good. Candor compels me to ask, "Which is the really real John Adams?" (Candor beyond candor might respond: "If you will give me precise information about the future, I will be able to tell you what I believe right now.")

Not knowing the future, no wonder we're phony when seeming candid. In the expression "Let it all hang out," the word *all* is phony. That is just what doesn't hang out—the "all" that is the soul or the inner being. This "all" we wish were used when an individual makes decisions and judgments, shapes responses to works of art, political speeches, and liturgical formulations. The candor beyond candor looks at whatever is most candid and visible, on TV or in ordinary conversation, and suspects it's a systematic con. But suspecting a con isn't finding the "all."

So the abundance of professed "loss" leads into a more or less predictable string of epistemological and hermeneutical questions. And we do know some of the answers. People write about loss because people write about loss; that is one of them. As towns built bigger cathedrals because other towns were doing it. But Agee did not write a whole book about his personal loss because it seemed to him "the thing to do"; nor is an Elie Wiesel posturing when devoting a life to the unfathomable loss called the Holocaust.

I cringe when the vestments of Robert Schuller quiver with the sweeping gestures of power and gain, but also I can't recite the formulas that express everything since Eden as bondage. The critic Harold Bloom keeps insisting that every new artist and writer feels more sense of loss than his predecessors: loss of confidence because of "anxiety" over how to do something really *new*. But *is* this so?

Fortunately, scholars and critics have lost rather little hubris or gumption. Indeed, I see ample room for novelty—epistemological and hermeneutical advances still to be made, merely in distinguishing more reliably good old phony American candor from the candor beyond candor. If we reported ourselves to one another, I suppose I am curious as to what would chiefly constitute the bedrock of our subsequent thinking. Would it be the hot, tempestuous lava of our experiences and feelings, or would it be language itself, chiseled in forced labor under the prodding of a relentless overseer/interviewer?

From Dogwood, yours faithfully,

C.V.

The Politics Of the Sewer

Gail McGrew Eifrig

Government, we learned long ago in social studies or intro to political science classes, has many forms. As a person more and more skeptical and discouraged about some of its major forms, I was interested to be a participant in government at its simplest level—one might even be tempted to say its "grass roots"—when our neighborhood began the process of organizing a sanitary sewer district.

A number of observations about this experience might be useful here, particularly if one bears in mind that the major forms, the federal government, for example, ought to bear some resemblance to minor ones. At least we ought to be able to perceive some common ground in the two manifestations of the universal attempt to govern with equity and justice.

We in the neighborhood did realize that we were, in the matter of sewers, experiencing anarchy. Though old regulations had been set up to insure that areas of poor soil drainage should not have septic systems, our neighborhood had expanded anyway on a kind of compromise between laissez faire and "what they don't know won't hurt them." Everybody had tales to tell, the horror stories that realtors don't like to mention but that come out when neighbors meet at property lines, turn off the mowers, and trade miserable secrets about sump pumps.

And you didn't need to be told; evening walks on hot summer nights could convince the most optimistic that something was wrong, and it wasn't just one person's problem. But, like many societies, we were used to anarchy, and in fact, had chosen it. After all, we weren't residents of the town, we were unincorporated, a wonderful term that seems clearly to designate a specific kind of political non-existence. Hoosiers on the whole seem to enjoy political non-existence, or at least I suppose that is the basis on which we conduct some of our elections.

But to return to the stench. It was not true that we galvanized ourselves into action. As a matter of fact, it was an agency of the federal government that first had to apprise, and then threaten us, about our situation. We were bad enough that the EPA itself took notice. Truth would demand that the august body was not strictly concerned only with Indian Boundary and Brummitt Road, but was in fact concerned with the entire region, all of whose water and soil use is wrong. They now tell us. But the problem was bad enough now that some agency of government would be invoked to turn us out of our houses if we did not "do something."

Now it is interesting what happens to a group of people under that kind of threat. Though we had lived in the area for two years, we had not really met any of our neighbors. We had waved across the road, and occasionally had exchanged incorrectly delivered mail, but we had not been in each other's

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grace before meals

nothing moves this morning
below the hill street of my mother's house
but seagulls
and the solitary milkman

the river shines

and babies sleep deeper than bulbs
beneath the snow

somehow
to a white tree by the river
an old robin returns

the milkman lifts his head to listen

joan vayo

presence, nor had we heard more than a sentence or two of what anybody had to say. That changed. We began to be called to meetings in the local school cafeteria, and those evenings were revelatory.

People talked in order to make their experiences clear to others. They confessed their fears of "incorporation," or of "more taxes," or of "being bossed around by the big guys." They argued for their points of view, they chose leaders, they listened to and criticized experts. They chose a lawyer to advise them, and they treated him amiably, but they acted as though it was still their house, their money, their neighborhood, and he shouldn't assume any authority until it was specifically given.

In any of these meetings, there were probably never more than 300 people (there are legally about 340 homeowners in the official district) but lots of them talked, and all of them listened. They came after long days in the office, or at the mills, or in the classroom or store, and they didn't go home until somebody gave them the answers they were after.

Eventually all of this resulted in the formation of an official body with the right to levy a tax, a body to which all of us belong simply by location, but to which we all have responsibilities. We have what I suspect is the only sanitary district in the country with a philosophy professor as its official representative to local government. We hope to be environmentally sound in a year or two.

Now one of the things that occurs to me in thinking about this episode is the vast difference between the interest we all displayed in our sewers, and the indifference so evident among the same people when it comes to national affairs. As I write this the Senate has just passed another large bill guaranteeing American aid to the *contras,* but not one person in my neighborhood has ever called a meeting to discuss it. The cafeteria at Brummitt School sits empty, and all around it people are doing their ordinary things. They are mowing lawns, and walking dogs, and jogging—but they're not talking to each other about what our government has undertaken to do with our futures in Central America.

I'm not suggesting that the Senate vote on the *contras* should have waited until all the neighborhood votes were in. That participatory no government can be.

I'm not suggesting that the Senate vote should have waited until all the neighborhood votes were in. That participatory a government can never be. And we could not possibly spend all our evenings discussing the balance of payments, the national debt, and what to do about Lebanon. (As Oscar Wilde remarked with characteristic cynicism, and a considerable degree of correctness, "The trouble with socialism is that it takes too many evenings.") But it does seem odd to me that never—not one evening in the year—do we gather to exchange ideas, experiences, arguments, fears, knowledge, preferences, and so on in the realm of national concerns.

I am supposed to be content with *Newsweek*'s poll on the subject, and to find that in the great national norms my neighbors and I are represented. But I am not very happy with that somehow. I would like to know from Mr. Price or Mrs. Autry themselves that they are willing for us to pay for a war in Nicaragua. Could we choose a kid out of the Graham Woods subdivision to go fight it?

It seems to me that a great deal of our interest in the larger forms of government is at the level of *People.* We do discuss what senators are doing in a gossipy way, and we have enough curiosity about the President's insides, or hairstyle, or personality to mention these things when the subject of "what the government is doing" comes up. But about the actions these people are taking, about the nature of their votes, some of us are silent.

There must be some reason that the polls keep showing that while many people disagree with the specific actions Reagan has taken, they consistently say that they agree with the statement that he is "doing a good job." Who are all these people who agree that the economy is getting stronger, that Americans should go to war, that there are no hungry people in our country, that minorities have been helped enough, that the defense budget should get bigger? I understand that government has to happen by means of compromise, and if I disagree with all those assertions just made, then I have to argue, discuss, dispute, contend—change minds to change policies. But where are these minds to contend with? Each of us is sitting at home, watching a commentator tell us what the polls say we think.

Maybe it's true what my daughter says—"It doesn't make any difference what you think, Mom, they'll do what they want anyway." So high school civics was wrong after all, and far from being a republic based on representative vote, we are a nation being managed from the top. I keep hoping that Americans might regain a sense of themselves as citizens, but it doesn't seem likely. Maybe before people take on the task of governing themselves, the smell just has to be a lot stronger.

THE LAST WORD

A Batty Adventure

Dot Nuechterlein

Oh, terrific. This morning I learned that in the past few days four bats were killed in the hallways outside my office. You have no idea what joy floods my heart at the news.

Some longtime readers of this page may recall that I don't have much use for animals. Except for giraffes—those ungainly-graceful quiet giants I can admire from afar—my world would be perfectly complete if it contained no non-humans whatsoever. (Please, no more hate mail over this issue, no matter how narrowminded and wicked you consider my attitude.)

I am willing to concede that most everyone else in the world likes the entire animal kingdom, and I can sort of understand a fondness for puppies, kittens, goldfish, or cockatoos. But bats? Do they really, truly add one whit (whatever that is) to your existence? Should they even have been created?

Of course it is impious to question the Creator's wisdom in any part of His handiwork. But I simply fail to see the social utility of bats, mosquitos, and other repulsive things, like rats and lizards. I choose to believe that a kind and loving God had His mind on more important matters and just wasn't paying close attention when He said "Let there be," and they were.

I recall as a small child asking why we have flies and bugs, and being told that they were food for other creatures. Some time later I asked about nasties like toads and crows, and learned that they are part of the food chain, keeping the bug population manageable. You see the circular reasoning here? Obviously we don't need any of them.

I am particularly loathe to know about the "nocturnal placental flying mammals with forelimbs modified to form wings" just beyond my door because I once had the horrendous experience of being held prisoner inside my own office by what was surely a crazed, vicious member of that species. I do not jest.

It was late on a hot, humid Saturday evening one June. I regularly find myself in the office at that hour, when no one is around and the phone doesn't interrupt my attempts at tunneling under the debris on my desk.

My door was closed, but since it didn't fit well in its ancient frame, any movement in the hallway brought a slight rattle. Gradually I became aware that the door was constantly vibrating: something was moving out there in the corridor.

My building is located on the edge of the campus adjacent to the city's least desirable street addresses, those inhabited by students and other slum dwellers. Friends always warned me about the dangers of working alone down there in the small hours, and previously I laughed at their concern. Ha.

While bravery is not my long suit, in time I got curious as to what type of man or beast had decided to come keep me company. I cracked the door ever so narrowly—and there it was, a *huge* bat swooping and careening up and down, round and about. Don't give me any of this "but bats are really tiny" stuff; I know huge when I see it. So I shut the door, determined to wait it out. Surely the hateful thing would tire and leave the lighted passageway, to return to whatever black hole it had come from.

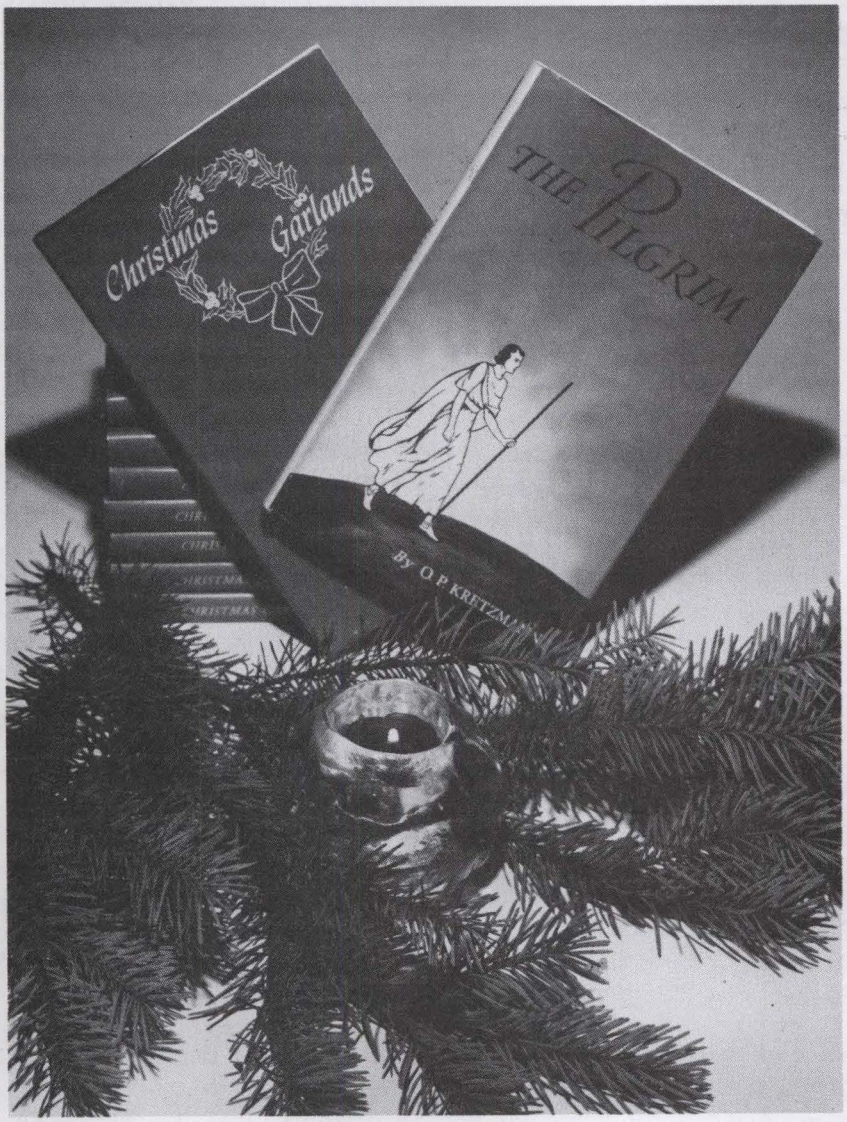
Wrong. Hours went by (well, at least one) yet the bat flew on. I became convinced that it must be rabid, and that venturing out into its path would certainly result in severe damage to my person. What to do? I thought of telephoning the man in my life, but by this hour he would be fast asleep, and besides, I had our only car with me. Screaming out the window was pointless, given the noise from the frat house two blocks away.

Aha! The word fraternity did present an idea. A friend, a former student who was president of his house, had introduced me to many of his brothers. This was now summer session and most students were gone, but I called that frat on the chance someone would answer and take pity. Luck was with me; I explained my plight to the fellow who said hello, and he agreed to come and rescue me. Through the window I would toss him an outside door key; he would make a lot of noise opening the door, which would scare away the bat long enough for me to escape.

And that's what happened, *except* that the student added his own little touch, one that made the entire episode almost worthwhile. It was wonderful. My knight in shining armor found a buddy, and the two of them came roaring down the street on a motorcycle—brandishing pledge paddles! Mr. Bat didn't have a chance, and scrammed as they came charging in after him. Surely no other damsel in distress, before or since, has witnessed a more delightful end to her misery.

So I guess I shouldn't worry about the current crop of beasties in the building, not as long as there are gallant fraternity men around, anyway. But I still don't like the idea of something lurking about, waiting to descend upon me. Let it turn its radar vision in some other direction, preferably in someone else's belfry.

For Good Reading In a Glad New Year



In Time— For Christmas

The herald angels' song is an everlasting antiphony . . . It moves down the centuries above, beneath, and in the earth from Christmas to Christmas to Christmas . . . In it alone is hope before death and after death . . . Their song lives to the 2,000th Christmas, to the 3,000th, and at length to the last Christmas the world will see . . . And on that final Christmas, as on the first, the angels will know, as we must know now, that the heart which began to beat in Bethlehem still beats in the world and for the world . . . And for us . . .

O. P. Kretzmann
The Pilgrim

Many years will pass before you understand Christmas . . . In fact, you will never understand it completely . . . But you can always believe in it, always . . . The Child has come to keep us company . . . To tell us that heaven is nearer than we had dared to think . . . To put the hope of eternity in our eyes . . . To tell us that the manger is never empty for those who return to it . . . And you will find with Him, I know, a happiness which you will never find alone . . .

O. P. Kretzmann
Christmas Garlands

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O. P. Kretzmann, President of Valparaiso University from 1940 to 1968, was also Editor of *The Cresset* from 1937 to 1968. In these two rare books many of his beloved "The Pilgrim" meditations were reprinted and are now available to new *Cresset* subscribers as a gift to themselves—or to give as a thoughtful Christmas gift to friends. *This offer expires December 15, 1986.* Current subscribers who wish to purchase either book may do so by sending $4.25 to cover shipping and the cost of the book.

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---------- ***The Pilgrim*** ---------- ***Christmas Garlands***

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